A MAN OF AMBITION

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JULIEN CATON

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A MAN OF AMBITION

A STORY OF PERU

BY

JULIEN CATON

F. TENNYSON NEELY,
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A MAN OF AMBITION.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK OF THE PACIFIC EXPRESS.

I was restless. Ever since daybreak we had been passing over the same monotonous succession of sandy plain. Only an occasional clump of scrubby sage brush relieved the blinding glare of the desert.

With a grunt of disgust, I turned from this dreary prospect. I tried to interest myself in a novel I had bought from the train boy. The novel was about as interesting as the landscape. My mind wandered constantly and I threw the book aside.

I was an adventurer. There were no ties that bound me to any one place. I had no country, no creed save my own inclination. I was a mere creature of circumstance, buffeted hither and thither by the winds of fortune. As for my private character, the less said about it the better.

I was a soldier and an adventurer by birth and by choice. The career of my father before me—Garnack Pasha, as he was best known—was an adventurous and stormy one. He was born a Virginian. He graduated from West Point in the later fifties, and served on the frontier for several years. When the Civil War broke out, he joined the Confederate Army. When the Confederacy fell, he went to Europe. He was with the Austrians in 1866. He met my mother while serving with the army of France in the dark days of 1870-71. My mother died when I was young.

From my earliest boyhood I was brought up for a military life. At seventeen I was serving on my father's staff in the army of the Sultan. I remained with my father till he was killed in a duel with a brother officer. I might have remained in the service, but I chose to leave Turkey. I knocked about a bit on my own hook, till war broke out between China and Japan. I joined the Japs and saw some service. Next I was with a French expedition into the Soudan. I came near being roasted alive by the niggers and got my fill of Africa. When the war with Greece broke out, I was again with the Turks. I was one of the few who got within sight of the Greeks. A bullet in my shoulder was my reward.

Then I came to America. I meant to join the Cubans, but when I learned more of them I changed my mind. Then the Klondike craze came. I decided to go to Alaska and try my hand at hunting gold.

Thus it was that I turned up on a west-bound Southern Pacific train, where my narrative opens. Little did I think, as I gazed out upon the sandy desert, that I was even then treading upon the threshold of the greatest drama of my life, of a series of adventures such as few men ever live to narrate.

The long car contained the usual assortment of passengers. There was the country couple, with their wise looks and affected air of confidence; the portly capitalist, on his way, perhaps, to inspect some of his mining interests; the drummer, with his smiling face and stock of good jokes; the mutually absorbed newly-married couple; and so on. I began amusing myself by noting their traits of character. Rarely have I found a better vantage point from which to study human nature than a railroad car. All the petty follies and foibles of mankind here disclose themselves.

In a moment my attention was attracted by a trio just opposite my seat. They would have attracted attention anywhere. Two were men; the third was a woman. I thought they were foreigners,—either Spanish or Mexican.

The elder of the men was of commanding presence. His hair and beard were white as snow. I found it difficult to judge his age; he might have been anywhere above fifty. His forehead was broad and massive, giving one an impression of the immense mental power the man possessed. His eyes were sunken, but from beneath the shaggy brows they were wont to flash with magnetic force. He was such a man as people turn to gaze after when they meet him on the street. His very gesture pronounced him one born to command.

The second man was also striking, but in an entirely different way. He was much younger than the first. His stature was rather below the ordinary. His hair and carefully waxed moustache were of the deepest black. He kept his small, white hands in constant motion, and his eyes roved continually. His whole appearance bespoke a nervous, excitable disposition. His face was rather hard, but at times it had a noble aspect. He was clearly no ordinary man.

The last of the trio was a woman. Her hair was light and her complexion fair, and her features those of an American. Her eyes were black, however, and her whole appearance stamped her as from a warmer clime. In her all the attraction of modern civilization was blended, with the romantic charm of the Middle Ages.

They were a strange trio. I fell to wondering who they were and from what part of the globe they came.

Directly, my musings received a startling interruption. I heard a shrill blast of warning from our engine; it was echoed a moment later by a more sonorous one from farther ahead. The jarring and bumping of the cars and the whistling of the brake shoes indicated that the engine was reversed and the brakes on. Men started up in alarm and women screamed. I threw up my window and craned out, eager to know the meaning of it all.

A heavy freight train was coming down the grade at a high rate of speed. The freight could not possibly be stopped before it struck our train. We had been running fast, too, and our speed had hardly begun to decrease. We were just passing over a long curving embankment. The engineer jumped and was flung down the embankment like a sack of meal. He lay huddled in a limp mass in the ditch, all still and bloody.

We were not long in suspense. In a moment there was a crashing and smashing of steel and wood, as the heavy freight engine struck our train. Both trains were still running at a high rate of speed when the crash came. When they came together the two engines reared up like wild horses.

A moment later the clouds of escaping steam hid them from view. I was pitched forward by the force of the collision. My head struck a projecting corner of the window frame. A wave of blackness passed over me, but it was gone in a moment. Fortunately I was in next to the last car of the long train, and the shock was not so great as it was further forward.

But one thing remains vivid in my memory. A pretty young woman was hurled from her seat. She landed in a heap in the aisle with one foot pushed through a band box containing the personal belongings of an old lady, and her arms about a drummer who had had the fortune to fall beneath her. In a moment she was sitting upright on the car floor with a shocked expression on her face. She looked for all the world as if she wanted some one to tell her what was proper to do under such circumstances.

By the force of their own momentum the cars were piled up in great heaps. They were all smashed and jammed together until there was little semblance of a train in the mass of wreckage. The two cars which brought up the rear of the train did not suffer this fate, however. They broke loose from the rest of the train, left the track and rolled down the embankment.

Our car turned completely over and lay half in the dry bed of a stream and half tilted upon the bank. Right in the middle of the car the whole side was smashed out by the projecting mason work of a culvert. The other car crashed right in on top, crushing and splintering worse than ever.

I never saw such a mass of wreckage as that car presented. It was jammed all out of shape. Great beams and fragments were scattered around in a most bewildering way. I never knew before that a car could make such a lot of wreckage.

No words can describe the scene. It was all so horribly unreal. The screams and shrieks of those who were injured dinned upon my ears like cries from hell. To add to the horror, from some unknown cause, the wreckage was already catching fire. The wisps of smoke and the little darts of flame creeping over the wreckage only added to the terror. In their imagination the flames were already devouring them. They yelled and screamed like demons in the agony of their fear.

Some few, however, lay still and white. Some had their skulls crushed; others were mangled in other ways. Death or unconsciousness mercifully withheld the scene from them.

Fortunately—and I have always been more fortunate than I deserved—I was not caught beneath any of the wreckage. I was not injured in any way save for the little cut I had received from the car window.

It may be strange, but I had no thought for any of the passengers save the trio of foreigners. At first, in the confusion of the wreckage, I could not see anything of them. A moment later I caught sight of the elder of the two men, but a short distance away. He was imprisoned beneath a heavy beam, it seemed. The younger man was close by. He did not seem to be injured in any way, but he was thoroughly frightened. He had about as much stamina as a wet rag. The woman was also there. Her clothing was torn and disordered, but she was apparently not much hurt, only thoroughly bewildered.

I picked my way over the masses of wreckage toward her. In a moment I was at her side.

"Can I be of any assistance to you?" I asked.

She glanced up into my face.

"My father!" she exclaimed. "Save him!"

"But you?" I pursued. "Won't you let me get you out first?"

"No; I will not go till my father goes."

The old man lay on his back with a heavy beam pressing upon his chest. He was suffering great pain, but he bore it heroically. No groans escaped his lips.

I seized hold of the heavy beam and lifted with all my strength, but I could not budge it. I dug my nails into the wood and strained till my head was ready to burst. The beam remained immovable.

"Try the other end," the old man said encouragingly.

I tried the other end, but with no better success. Glancing at the younger man, I saw him regarding my futile efforts with something like a diabolical leer. The car was rapidly filling with smoke and it distorted the vision, so that I may have been mistaken. The woman was standing by him, trembling like a leaf.

"Come and help me!" I exclaimed to the fellow. To me it seemed strange that he had not offered his help before.

"Certainly I will," he exclaimed, starting as a man awakened from sleep.

He was quite ready now to do anything that I suggested, but it seemed to me that he put very little enthusiasm in his work. He was weak from his late experience, and I suppose he did the best he could. The woman never ceased urging us to persevere with the work.

Most of the passengers had managed to get out of the car. Only two or three still remained and they were crawling to the doorway. Still we worked on. The car was so full of smoke that we could hardly breathe. The little red tongues of flame kept creeping nearer and nearer. The old man was still possessed of his senses, but he never uttered a groan or a complaint.

After a while the young man threw his hands to his face and staggered back, overcome by the smoke.

"There's no use trying any longer," he said.

"We mustn't give up yet," I returned.

"We might as well. We can't do anything."

"Oh, don't give up," cried the woman, with her hands clasped in supplication. "For heaven's sake, save my father! O, save him! Don't let him perish here!"

"Don't leave me," pleaded the old man. "Don't leave me to die here. Try once more. Just once more."

"It's no use," growled the young man. "We can't move that beam. We must go. If we stay in here any longer we will lose our own lives."

I hesitated. What the young man said was true. But to leave a man to die thus—that was horrible. Then, too, the woman cast me a look of mute appeal that would have melted a heart of stone.

"Come, let's get out of here before it's too late," the young fellow said. He took the woman's arm to lead her away.

"No," she cried angrily, breaking away from him. "I won't go till my father goes."

"You had better go, Carmencita," said the old man weakly.

"Oh, father, I can't go away and leave you here," she said, with tears in her eyes.

The young man muttered a malediction under his breath. He took her arm again and tried to lead her away. With a cry of anger she endeavored to break away from him, but could not. He took her up in his arms, displaying sudden strength in so doing, and started toward the doorway.

"Come on," he called back to me. "We've done all that we can do. You won't get out of this infernal place at all if you don't come now."

I hesitated.

"Oh, save my father!" exclaimed the girl. "Save him!"

I could not resist that appeal.

"Are you coming?" asked the young man.

"No," I returned rather shortly. "I'm going to get this man out of this."

"Thank God!" exclaimed the woman fervently.

"You'd better come now," the fellow said.

"Don't you trouble yourself about me."

The car was full of dense blue smoke. The fire had gained considerable headway, and it was fearfully hot. My eyes were like hot coals and my lungs like ovens. I decided to try a last plan. A piece of the heavy railing that ran along the side of the car had been splintered off. Seizing hold of this I managed to break off a fragment several feet long. The wood was tough and it would make an excellent lever.

The old man was unconscious now. I was thankful for this. If I had to desert him, it would not be before his eyes. The smoke was choking me. I would not be able to stay in the car much longer without myself succumbing. I inserted the lever beneath the heavy beam and lifted with all my strength. I was working almost without hope. The infernal smoke was suffocating me. The heat raised blisters on my hands. I put all my strength in a last effort. It was now or never.

At first the beam remained immovable. I strained every muscle in a last effort. It budged a little. My heart beat eagerly. I got a new purchase and again strained every muscle. It moved easier now that it was started. In a few minutes I had the beam moved so as to enable me to drag the old man out from beneath it. He was totally unconscious and remained a helpless burden in my arms.

My eyes were so blinded by the dense smoke that I could hardly see. Moreover, I was suffocating for want of fresh air. Dragging the old man along after me, I stumbled over the wreckage toward the end of the car. I thought I would never reach it. My eyes were throbbing, and my brain whirling.

At last I stumbled and fell beneath the load. To my surprise and joy the smoke was not so dense near the floor. With my face close to the floor I crawled on. The smoke was getting thicker and thicker. I could hear the hissing and crackling of the flames behind me. It seemed that they were at my very heels. On, on, I crawled, miles, it seemed.

At last I reached the door. I crawled weakly through, dragging the body of the unconscious man after me. There was air for me to breathe now. I drew it into my heated lungs. It was like nectar. I was free from that infernal hell at last.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN AMONG MEN.

I was still weak and dizzy; everything seemed to be whirling about me. I caught sight of the woman, and heard her little scream of joy as she ran toward me. Then some one relieved me of my burden. That is about as much as I remember of the next few minutes. I did not faint, but I was utterly exhausted.

The wave of exhaustion quickly passed off. In a few minutes I felt pretty well, except for a violent headache and the pain from the cut on my head. The woman and the young man were trying to restore the old man to consciousness. Their efforts were soon rewarded and he opened his eyes.

The wreckage was now all enveloped in flame and smoke. The scene was touching. What but an hour before had been a splendid train was now only a smoking mass of ruins. The passengers, those of them who were able, were congregated around in little groups, attending to the wounded and watching the burning debris. The wrecking crew had not arrived yet.

In tremulous tones the old man thanked me over and over for having saved his life, as he said, at the risk of my own. He said I should never have cause to regret my act.

I learned that he was Señor Rafael Paramonte, a Peruvian visiting the United States for business and pleasure. The younger man was Señor Juan Satander, a friend of his. As he said this I thought he glanced a little hard at Satander. The woman was his daughter, Carmencita.

Carmencita! I caught myself repeating the name to myself and reflecting what a sweet sounding name it was. As for the señorita herself, she was certainly charming. She bandaged my wounded head in a most skillful manner. She spoke to me in English with a most delightful, soft accent.

We had a long and dreary wait there on the open prairie; but, for my part, I enjoyed it. Carmencita devoted herself to me, although the fellow Satander was evidently displeased. Once our eyes met suddenly, and a little frightened look came over her face as she noticed the intensity of my gaze. She flushed suddenly, as if by some sudden remembrance. A look of guilt which I could not understand crossed her face. She became more reserved and cold in her conversation. I was puzzled what to make of this sudden change.

After several dreary hours of waiting, a train backed up from the west, and we were at liberty to resume our journey. A great deal of time was consumed in bringing the injured into the cars, and an hour or two more elapsed before we finally got started.

But at last we were comfortably installed in our seats and the train was rolling away westward. Only a few passengers were in the car, but the few were a motley lot. Here was a man with an arm in a sling; there one with a crushed foot; yonder one with a bandaged head; and so on.

For some reason Señor Paramonte was greatly interested in me, and he questioned me closely.

"You have the appearance of a soldier, Señor Garnack," he said finally. "Is soldiering your profession?"

"It's the only profession I have ever followed," I replied.

"Are you in the service now?" he asked, his voice betraying his eagerness.

"No, I'm not in any service now. I've got enough money to keep my head above water, so I don't have to tie myself down to anything. I'm about what you call an adventurer, a soldier of fortune. I'm ready to take hold of anything that promises a little excitement."

Señor Paramonte regarded the back of the seat in front thoughtfully. He was cogitating some plan.

"You are a soldier," he repeated slowly.

"I've been in service off and on ever since I was seventeen."

"What country?"

"Turkey and Japan principally."

"You can drill a company?"

"I have done it. I suppose I could do it again."

"Quite so, quite so."

I was silent.

"How would you like to see some active service?"

"In a foreign army?"

"Yes, in a foreign army."

"I'd like it if there's a chance of seeing some fighting done. Nothing could suit me better."

"I think I can supply you with all the excitement you want."

"In what army is this service you speak of to be —that of Peru?"

He glanced at me keenly.

"I suppose I can trust you in a matter that I want kept secret?" he said.

I began to understand. Paramonte was a revolutionist.

"I give you my word of honor as a soldier that nothing you tell me shall pass my lips unless you desire it."

"My country, Peru," he began, speaking in low but earnest tones, "is in a very unsettled state. Doubtless you know this. The people are restless. They are accustomed to fly to arms on the slightest provocation. This retards the development of the country. If a stable government could be established in Peru, all this would be changed. Prosperity would follow. Do you begin to understand?"

"I think I do. You mean to overthrow the present government and make yourself president."

Señor Paramonte fixed his eyes upon me.

"Not exactly that," he said. "The Peruvians have not yet learned the secret of self-government. A republic is not best for them. They abuse their privileges. They need rather a highly centralized form of monarchial government. I mean to make an empire of Peru and place myself upon the throne. I will encourage all forms of industry. I will raise a great army and build a navy equal to any South American State. My army will first be turned upon Chile. In 1881 the Chileans humbled us to the dust. They overran our territory; they sacked our cities; they tore away our provinces. Our revenge will be sure and it will be terrible. We will fight half a dozen battles and we will win them all. They will sue for peace. I will grant peace, but it will cost them dear. I will take back everything that we ever lost, and they will pay an indemnity sufficient to cover the cost of the war. Then I will turn on Bolivia. Bolivia is already Peruvian at heart. The resistance will be feeble. After one or two small battles we will plant the flag of Peru at La Paz. It will never come down.

"Glory is what a people want. A nation lives on its glory. My armies will be covered with glory. I will make Peru mistress of the southern continent. Ecuador is but a name. No resistance will be made there. I will find a pretext for war against Colombia. I will put the Ecuadorians and Bolivians in the front. They will win glory. That will veneer over any hurt that they may feel. They will be willing subjects. Then I will allow a period of rest. I will build railroads and develop Peru internally. Her wealth will astonish the world. My power will increase all the time. I will annoy Argentina in every way possible. She will join Chile and they will declare war. I will appear on the defensive. My navy will be great then. There will be a great naval battle, and then we will bombard Valparaiso. Valparaiso will fall. An army will follow the fleet. We will overrun Chile, and crush her completely.

"At the same time I will send an army of fifty thousand men down the Pilcomayo. The Paraguayans hate the Argentines. They will join me and furnish twenty thousand men. A great battle will be fought near Corrientes. The Argentines will be routed. There will be no more resistance until we reach Rosario. We will capture the city after one battle. Another expedition will be sent down the Argentine Central Railway. They will hold it, and we will make it our line of supplies. We will march upon Buenos Ayres. When my armies appear the city will be panic stricken. They will sue for peace. I will grant them peace, but make them pay a heavy money indemnity and give up much of their territory.

"I will cross into Uruguay and plant the flag of Peru upon the capital at Montevideo. Then I will turn upon Brazil. A great war will follow. Doubtless we will lose some battles, for they will outnumber us. But our veterans will win in the end. Peru will be a mighty nation, and I will be her ruler. I will be dictator to all South America."

I listened spellbound while the old Peruvian spoke so glowingly of the brilliant future in store for him and Peru. He spoke swiftly, his eye flashed, and his whole frame quivered beneath the power of his conceptions. His hand was clenched as if it already grasped a sword hilt. He was every inch a soldier then. I had but to close my eyes and I beheld him at the head of his victorious hosts while all South America bowed before him.

"But," he said, after a moment's pause, "there are many things that must be accomplished before this can be so. I must first be established emperor in Peru. The time is ripe. The people of the South are already incensed against the present government. The taxes are high and the bigger part of them go to the collectors' pockets. There is no glory to veneer over this. The army is in a wretched state. There is no navy. We will land a shipload of military supplies in the south. Our real project—to create an empire—must remain secret for a while at least. We will arm the disaffected people. They will overthrow the government. We will march to Lima. I will be made president first. I will create an army that will remain loyal to me under any circumstances. Then I will proclaim the empire. There will be an uprising, but my army will put it down with a strong hand. An empire will be new to the people. They will be dazzled and they will submit. All we want now is secrecy—secrecy and men who can turn the untrained rabble into fighting machines, and lead them to victory afterward. That's what I want with you. You will rise swiftly. We have few trained officers. In a few years you will be the first of my generals, and—who knows—if you serve me faithfully, I may see fit to place you upon the throne of one of the empires I shall create of the countries I conquer."

It was indeed a dazzling prospect that his words opened before me. To don a uniform once more; to become a leader of men; to ride at the head of his victorious armies as they swept through the mountains and over the pampas of South America; perhaps, even to sit upon the throne of an empire! I did not ask myself what would happen should his ambitious plans fail. I saw only the glorious possibilities of the career he laid before me. The sight dazzled me.

"Most willingly will I serve you," I said without a moment's hesitation.

"You are a brave man, I know, and you shall be a great one," he returned, grasping my hand.

Of the rest of our journey to San Francisco there is little to be said. I learned that Paramonte had purchased a large supply of rifles and military supplies; they were to be shipped on a steamer which he had chartered. This steamer was not at San Francisco. After having placed his order he had crossed to England. His daughter Carmencita had been there, staying with some relatives. She had decided to return with him to Peru.

I asked him if he didn't think it would be dangerous for Carmencita to be in Peru while her father was engaged in a rebellion against the government. He only smiled and said he didn't suppose there would be much danger. I really believe he was so confident of success that he never once thought of what the consequences were should his plans fail.

Satander occupied most of Carmencita's time, although she did not seem to like him over much. I hardly spoke to her during the entire journey. When I did Satander glared at me like a hungry tiger. I knew that I had made an enemy of the man, but I could not tell how. And I may add that I did not care. Carmencita herself seemed to want to avoid me. Still I could scarcely take my eyes off her pretty face, and one sad little smile that she bestowed upon me set my heart behaving strangely. I knew that I had never seen a woman who attracted me as she did.

We arrived in San Francisco late in the evening.

We registered at the Occidental Hotel. I was sleepy and I immediately went to my room and retired. The next morning I got up rather late. I wanted to see Señor Paramonte, but he was out in the city attending to some business.

My room was directly opposite the suite occupied by Señor Paramonte and his daughter. I was smoking idly. My door was standing half open. Directly I glanced up and saw a man coming along the corridor. I did not pay much attention to him, supposing that he had a room on the same floor. He went straight to Paramonte's door and knocked. This aroused my interest at once. The man was connected with Paramonte, and therefore he was connected with me.

Paramonte was out, I knew that. The door was opened by Carmencita herself. When she saw the man she stepped back and started as if greatly surprised.

"You here!" she exclaimed.

The man smiled good humoredly.

"Me or my ghost," he said.

"But how—what are you doing here? I thought you were still in Peru."

"Couldn't stay there after you left. Came home a month ago. Goin' back though now."

A shadow of irritation passed over Carmencita's face.

"Where will you be?" she asked.

The fellow smiled.

"I'm on the high road to fortune and favor," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I've seen your father and I'm goin' to join him in his rebellion. I'll stay with him long enough to prove my worth, if I've got any, and then——" He bent over and whispered in her ear a few words that sent the blood tingling over her cheeks.

"Does he know you?"

The man shook his head and whispered something that I could not catch.

"You must be very careful," she said, abstractedly. "If he were to discover your real identity he would kill you."

"No danger," the man said with a laugh.

"What makes you seem so cold, Carmencita?" he asked suddenly. "Has any one come between us?"

"How could you think it?" she said reproachfully. "But here comes father. You must get away. Don't let him see you."

The fellow hurried away.

So this was a lover of Carmencita's! Lover! The thought did not have a soothing effect upon my mind. Carmencita's lover; I felt that I wanted to go out and shoot that big fellow. I was jealous, madly jealous, on account of a woman I had not known twenty-four hours. I tried to fight the feeling down, but it boiled up all the more fiercely. I was in love and I was jealous. I tried to scoff at the idea, but it would not be scoffed at. I wanted to do something rash.

Paramonte came to my room before he went to his own apartments. He was in the very best of spirits. I never saw an old man appear so young and happy. He was fairly bubbling over with good humor. He wanted to talk to me, he said, and asked me to go to his room.

Satander was with Señor Paramonte, but he did not enter with him, passing toward his own room instead.

"I haven't decided where we will land," Paramonte was saying to him as they parted. "I can't well decide till I see some of the officers who can tell me how things are going. I'll find some way to let Captain James know where to land after we get to Peru. Our boat will make it lots faster than the Sally J. As for that man you spoke of, you can see Captain James about him. If he wants him, I suppose it's all right."

"Very well."

Paramonte and I entered the room together. Carmencita was seated at the opposite side of the room, staring hard at the window. There was a troubled expression on her face. She glanced up as we entered and her eyes fell as she recognized me.

"Everything is working to perfection," Paramonte said, genially. "In fact, things couldn't be in better shape. Captain James—he's the skipper, you know—got his whole cargo without exciting any suspicion. I knew he could manage it. How do you want to go to Peru? Carmencita, Satander and myself are going to Callao on the State of Nevada, which sails to-morrow. It would appear more regular, you see. There's an American chap though going on the Sally J., a fellow named Whitman." I glanced at Carmencita. She was blushing. I guessed that this was her lover. "Which steamer do you want to go on? You can go with us or on the Sally, just as you like."

I glanced at Carmencita. If I went with Paramonte, I reflected, I would have the pleasure of her society. Paramonte noticed my glance, and he looked pleased.

"I guess you will want to go with us," said he with a smile. "It would please me I——"

Just at this moment a bell boy appeared. He said that there was a gentleman down in the office who wanted to speak with Señor Paramonte.

"It must be Captain James," he said. He excused himself and followed the boy. I rose to take my leave also.

Carmencita stepped toward me. Her face was pale and troubled. She glanced up at me imploringly.

"Señor Garnack," she said, struggling to appear calm, "don't go on the steamer with us."

"Why—that is—" I stammered in surprise.

"You won't, will you?"

"But why, señorita?"I asked, glancing into her eyes.

"Because, señor, because I—oh, I can't tell my reasons. But, Señor Garnack, I—if you have any respect for my feelings, you won't come."

"Very well, señorita, if you wish it, I will go on the other steamer," I returned rather coldly.

"Please don't think hard of me," she said brokenly, "but I—I—oh, I can't explain to you."

She left the room, leaving me standing there thoroughly bewildered and staring after her like a fool. I was in a quandary as to what her motive might be. I thought she might want to be with her other lover, the fellow I had seen; but he was going on the Sally J. I was puzzled.

However, when I met Señor Paramonte again I told him that I had decided to go on the Sally J. He was surprised, and looked at me strangely for a moment. Then he passed on, remarking that it was probably for the best.

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD THE SALLY J.

I gathered up my small possessions and sent them off to the wharf, where the Sally J. lay. After taking a farewell of Señor Paramonte I followed myself. I had hoped to see Carmencita once more, but in this I was disappointed. I went away feeling rather depressed in the region of my heart.

In a few minutes I was rambling about the wharves watching the ships loading their cargoes, bound for every quarter of the globe. I was in no hurry and proceeded along leisurely. All the time I was trying to think of some satisfactory reason why Carmencita Paramonte did not wish me to take passage on the steamer with her. I was sure that the man I took for her lover had something to do with it, but how? He was going to be on the Sally J., I was sure. Then it could not be that she wanted to be with him. Perhaps for some reason she wished to throw us together, but what her reason for that was I could not imagine. I was puzzled. At the same time I was madly jealous of the fellow.

Meditating thus, I came up to where the Sally J. lay. Satander was there talking to a man whom I took for the Sally J.'s skipper. Satander seemed to be urging something upon him, and the old skipper was protesting in most vigorous language.

"I tell you I don't want none of your damned dagoes on my ship," the skipper was saying, "an' I won't have enny of 'em. I don't give a damn what Satander said. I'm runnin' the Sally J., an' I'm goin' to run her my own way. Don't you sass me back, or I'll kick you overboard."

"Oh, very well, I suppose I'll have to respect your wishes," said Satander with a sneering smile.

With this he left the ship. We met on the gangway. He bowed effusively to me, so effusively, in fact, that I was tempted to take him by the shoulders and kick him soundly. I detested the fellow. The feeling was reciprocated.

Angrily I turned my head and watched Satander as he hurried away. As he was passing along by a crowd of quarreling, half-drunken sailors, one of them, a dark-skinned fellow, accosted him. The sailor asked him some question, at the same time indicating the Sally J. by a gesture.

Satander nodded and hurriedly spoke a sentence or two to the fellow, who immediately rejoined the group of drunken quarrelers. Satander hurried on. Once he glanced behind him, I thought, to ascertain if any one had noticed the little passage with the sailor. I wondered what business a gentleman, such as Satander very evidently was, could have with a common sailor. A suspicion that Satander was up to some dirty work crossed my mind, but I instantly dismissed it.

I was warmly welcomed by Captain James, the skipper. He was a tall, gaunt, hollow-cheeked Yankee, with "sailor man" written all over him. A great quid of tobacco always distended his leathery jaw. His jerky conversation was seasoned by the most ferocious oaths, and punctuated with squirts of tobacco juice. His lanky, bony form was well knit, and he was just such a man as one would not care to meet in personal encounter.

"There's somethin' wrong with that feller," he said, gazing after Satander. "The damned land lubber thought he could run me. Wanted to get one of his infernal old dagoes in my crew. I'd see him in hell before I'd let his man on board."

"When do we sail?" I asked.

"We'll get out termorrow. I'll have to leave you now for a while, anyhow. Got to go an' get some more grub. Didn't know we wuz goin' to have passengers this trip, till old Paramonte come an' told me this mornin'. Don't want to feed ye on pork an' hardtack. But jest make yeself to home. Most o' the crew is on shore. The rest are down below sleepin'. Don't you worry. If that feller Whitman comes before I gets back tell him where I've gone."

The big-hearted old sea dog lumbered off, rolling like a ship in a storm. Left to myself I examined the Sally J. more closely than I had done before. The only sign of life about her was a most unmelodious refrain sung by the Chinese cook somewhere below deck.

The Sally J. was a small tramp steamer, so small in fact that she was little more than a tug. There was nothing very attractive about her. She had been painted some dark color long years before, but what that color was could scarcely be told. Her deck was dirty, and there was the same uncertain odors about her that may be found about any tramp. Her one funnel was battered and rusty.

I sat down near the wheel and began thinking anew the thoughts that I had been thinking for the last few hours. What was the meaning of Carmencita's conduct? I arrived at no better conclusion than the unsatisfactory ones that had already presented themselves. I wished now that I had made Carmencita explain the matter when I had the chance.

The Sally J.'s wharf was rather remote from the busiest portion of the water front. The only sounds of activity came from afar. The Chinese cook had ceased his singing, and the Sally J. was still as the ocean itself. Consequently I was a little startled when I heard a heavy tread upon the deck behind me. I turned to see who the newcomer might be.

At first glance I recognized the newcomer. It was Carmencita's lover. I had expected him on the Sally J., but I was surprised at his appearance.

The man was considerably over medium size. His figure was strong and burly, though well proportioned. I did not think he was of tropical birth, yet the manner in which he carried his body proclaimed him a citizen of a warmer clime. His features were blunt and strong, though rather irregular. A smile played about his lips, and there was a twinkle in his eye. His appearance was that of a bluff, big-hearted man. He was careless and free in the manner of his dress and in his speech.

"Captain James on board?" he asked in his blunt manner.

"He is not on board just now," I replied. "He's out buying provisions. He will be back soon, though."

"Sorry. Reckon I'll have to wait."

"He'll be back before long. Your name is Whitman, I believe?"

The newcomer started perceptibly and glanced at me.

"Yes, that's my name," he said hesitatingly.

I was sure from his confusion and what I had heard at the hotel that this was not his real name, but I did not choose to make this known to him.

"I heard Señor Paramonte speak of you. That's how I came to know your name."

Whitman was relieved.

"You are in the service of Señor Paramonte, I suppose?" I continued.

Whitman laughed uneasily. I did not like the sound.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I mean to fight for Paramonte when I get to Peru. 'Tain't the love of fightin', though, that takes me there. I'm not much of a fighter myself."

"Perhaps it's the love of a woman that takes you then?" I said. I gave a forced laugh as I said this, but at the same time I could hardly restrain my jealous wrath.

He glanced at me angrily, and was greatly confused.

"There's no woman in it." he returned hastily.

I smiled an indulgent smile that did not prevent him from seeing that I was unconvinced.

"Then if you don't like fighting, and there's no woman in the case, I don't see what takes you to

Peru," I said. "Surely you are not going on a mere pleasure jaunt."

He laughed uneasily again.

"No, I don't come for pleasure," he said with a wavering smile. "'Twon't do any harm to tell you though, and I'll do it." I was surprised, and I was interested. "My home is in the town of Carton, State of Illinois. I once had a brother. Maybe I've got one yet. He was two or three years younger than me. He might ha' been a little wild, but, taken all around, he was a purty good sort of a fellow—at least, ordinarily good. It's the same old story. He was employed in the bank at Carton six months ago. He got to goin' with a set of young, half respectable devils. He always was one of these chaps what anybody can influence. He'd spend the night with these fellows. Regular devils, they were. They got him to gamble with 'em. You know how it went then. Just the same old story. Of course he lost. That only made it worse. He thought his luck was sure to turn. After his money was all gone he gambled on his credit. Before he knew what he was doin' he was five hundred dollars in debt. The damned rascals threatened to disclose everything if he didn't pay at once. He couldn't raise the money. You know what he did, of course—went and took it from the bank. 'Course he meant to pay it back. All of 'em do. He couldn't afford to wait long enough, or it might be discovered. So he took to gamblin' again. He thought his luck would change sure. You know how a man gets when he's once got a start. More he loses, more he plays. Jack may ha' been a damn fool, but he meant for the best. First thing he knew he was in debt again. It wasn't so hard this time. He took more of the bank's money. And he kept on with his gamblin'. That's the way things went. He kept takin' more and more. The bank people begun to fear that somethin' was wrong. They went over the books. The thing came out then. Jack had took more'n five thousand dollars. They wanted him arrested. Jack heard that the game was up and skipped out. He knew that he would be sent to the pen if he stayed. He went to 'Frisco first. Next we heard of him, he was in Peru. We got one more letter from him. Said he'd joined a gang of rebels. The Lord only knows why he wanted to be where there was any fightin'. I guess he was ready for anything, though.

"That was months ago. We haven't heard of him since. Dunno whether he's been killed or what's become of him. I don't think he's dead though. I got it in my head to go down and hunt him up. Run across old Paramonte in Chicago. He was buyin' rifles and the like there. That give me an idea of what he was up to. Jack had said he joined the rebels. It was reasonable to suppose that it was Paramonte's rebellion. I got in Paramonte's service, anyhow. You see I'm goin' to Peru to hunt up Jack, and incidentally to serve Paramonte. It's hardly my doin', though. Jack had a little sweetheart at Carton. She believes in him. You know how women will do when they're in love. She's the one that persuaded me to go and hunt him up. Then she wants him to go somewhere she can join him. So my mission is a sort of a conglomerate one, I guess you'd call it. I'll help Paramonte;

I'll find my own brother, and I'll contribute to Nellie's happiness."

"And you'll win Carmencita Paramonte," I added with a smile, remembering the episode at the hotel. Somehow my anger against Whitman cooled down as I heard him talk.

Whitman was startled. He glanced over me keenly.

"What do you know of Carmencita and me?" he asked with some hesitation. If I had expected him to deny his connection with her I was disappointed.

"All I know is that you are her lover, and one of your reasons for serving Paramonte is to get him to let Carmencita marry you," I said bluntly.

Whitman was smoking at a cigar. He regarded the little blue curls of smoke for a moment and then he turned to me, and fixed his shrewd eyes upon mine.

"I don't know how you found this out," he said calmly and deliberatively. "There's no use to deny it, though. Yes, I am in love with Carmencita Paramonte. I've been in Peru in the service of the Peruvian Nitrate Company for the last seven years, till I came home a month or two ago and found Jack in such a devil of a fix. I met Carmencita at Callao. I fell in love with her, but we knew that her father would not let her marry me. Now I am in hopes that I can prove of some use to him in his rebellion. Then after I've performed some prodigy of valor I can disclose myself like they do in fairy tales, and maybe he'll let us marry. Quite romantic, ain't it? But I hope you won't disclose this to Paramonte and spoil our little game. He has no idea that I am his daughter's lover."

Whitman's frank explanation quite disarmed me. He spoke in such a truthful, straight-forward way that I had to believe him.

"I assure you," I said, crushing down my jealousy, which proposed the other course, "that I will keep your secret. More, I will aid you in every way possible."

I congratulated myself on my magnanimity. Whitman was pleased and he grasped my hand warmly.

"But I want to find my brother, too. You might call that another romance. I'm a devilish unromantic person to be so romantic," he said with a laugh. "Here's a photo of my brother. It's a good likeness."

I took the photograph and examined it critically. The original Jack Whitman was a slender, slightly built young man of perhaps twenty-five years. His features were rather effeminate. The face was weak, and not attractive. There was no resemblance to the broad-shouldered, jolly-faced brother before me.

Listlessly I turned the photograph over and glanced at the back. Across the top was written, "From Jack to his own Nellie." Just below this an affectionate couplet had been written in a fine, feminine hand.

"That's a photo he gave his sweetheart, Nellie Raymond," Whitman continued, noticing my glance. "I didn't have any good ones, and so I got this one of her. If you ever come across Jack in Peru, tell him that Nellie is ready to join him wherever he wishes. All he has to do is to communicate with her."

"Certainly I will tell him this if I ever come across him," I said promptly. "You—but here comes Captain James."

* * * * * * *

The night which followed was dark and rather squally. A drizzly rain was falling. Captain James, Whitman, the mate and myself were congregated in the cabin. We were cracking jokes and enjoying ourselves thoroughly, with occasional journeys to the decanter on the sideboard.

Directly I remembered that I had left something on deck that the rain would injure. With an excuse I hurried up the companion way. The night was dismal and the wharf unlighted. I could hardly distinguish anything in the gloom. However, I knew just where I had left the article, and I hastened toward the spot, feeling my way along the rail.

One of the crew was supposed to be on deck, but he had taken refuge in the forecastle. He was evidently of the opinion that the Sally J. could take care of herself in San Francisco harbor. I was all alone on the deck. Suddenly I thought I heard a light step behind me. I turned quickly, but I could see nothing in the inky darkness.

A moment later I heard another slight sound. Again I peered in the direction of the sound. Just at this juncture a brilliant flash of lightning illumined the sky, the bay and the old wharf. I caught just a glimpse of the dim, uncertain figure of a man lowering himself through a hatchway which had not been securely covered. The man's face was turned towards me, and it was impressed upon my mind as if burned there by the lightning itself. I thought it was the sailor with whom I had seen Satander conversing that afternoon.

I was frightened by this ghost-like appearance, but I rushed to the hatchway. I peered excitedly into the hold. The darkness there was even more intense than it was on the outside, if that were possible. I could distinguish nothing, and I could hear nothing.

After some time I found a match and struck it. I held the flaming match into the dark hold. It only aggravated the darkness, and I could see nothing. I tried several times, but I could see nothing of the strange apparition.

At last I came to the conclusion that it had all been an illusion of my excited brain. Inwardly cursing myself for letting my imagination get the best of me, I returned to the cabin.

Fearing to be made a butt for their ridicule, I said nothing to my companions of my adventure.

CHAPTER IV.

IN PERUVIAN WATERS.

The next morning the Sally J. commenced her voyage. We had hardly lost sight of land when I began to experience a most unpleasant sensation in the region of my stomach. It was as if four conflicting tempests had met within me. The alarming symptoms grew worse. I went below and crawled into my berth, thoroughly disgusted with the sea. For the next two days I meditated suicide.

At last a pale, miserable wretch ventured to crawl out on deck once more. Whitman was there, but he looked about as miserable as myself. He had gone through the same experience. However, the refreshing sea breezes revived us. We improved rapidly, both in body and mind.

The weather we encountered was generally fine. We had but one hard blow. This outward calm did not apply to the inner workings of the Sally J. Everything went smoothly enough for the first week or ten days. Then the crew began to mutter among themselves and declare that the ship was haunted. Unlike most followers of the sea, Captain James did not believe in ghosts. He swore at the crew and threatened to put them all in irons. They held to their belief that the ship was haunted. Nothing could shake this belief. More than one claimed to have seen the ghost. One more wise than the others ascertained in some unknown manner that on her last voyage the mate of the Sally J. had been killed by a mutinous sailor. His ghost now haunted the ship.

Another claimed that he had seen the ghost issue from the cook room. He was so frightened that he was unable to cry out. The ghost had vanished before his eyes. It was a difficult matter to get one of the crew on deck after dark.

The cook declared that things had been disappearing from his pantry. He attributed the disappearance to the ghost. His own character was not above suspicion though. Captain James flatly accused him of stealing the stuff he claimed had disappeared. With many oaths the old skipper threatened to murder him if he heard him speak of ghost again. Some of the coal passers claimed to have heard suspicious noises. The men all but refused to work. I was afraid they would mutiny and take the Sally J. to the nearest port and desert her.

At first I was tempted to tell of my own experience that night in San Francisco harbor. Upon reflection, though, I decided to keep my own counsel. It would only increase the fears of the crew and hold me up for the derision of Whitman and Captain James. Generally I don't believe in ghosts, but I was beginning to believe in this one.

At last Captain James decided to overhaul the whole ship. We searched every nook and cranny, we thought, above deck and below. Nothing was found. This only tended to confirm the fears of the superstitious crew; to them the ghost was a matter of settled fact. This was more especially so, as one of their number claimed to have seen the ghost the very next night.

There were ominous mutterings among the men, but Captain James held them under with a strong hand. No outbreak occurred, but the skipper's authority was often stretched almost to the breaking point.

At last we arrived in Peruvian waters. We exercised more caution here, but we were not molested. We touched at Callao, but only long enough for Captain James to send a messenger ashore. The messenger soon returned with a written order from Paramonte. The skipper read it, and then crushed it in his hand, swearing quite volubly. I did not think he was much pleased.

Leaving Callao we steamed southward day after day. Sometimes we were well out to sea, and sometimes we were in sight of the dreary, barren coast. One evening we were hugging along the coast, and I judged from the expression of satisfaction upon the skipper's face that we were nearing our goal. Sure enough, shortly after nightfall the engines were stopped. Three rockets were sent up, as a signal to some one on shore, I supposed. A single rocket from the shore was our answer. Captain James muttered an oath of satisfaction.

We remained motionless till day dawned. Then we got under way again, headed for the shore. The coast line rose slowly into view, indescribably dreary and barren. Captain James was anxiously scanning the shore with his glass. Directly I heard him mutter a grunt of satisfaction. Peering in the direction his glass was pointed, I could just see a tiny, black speck upon the water. As it approached us this speck resolved itself into a boat. There was but one occupant. Ten minutes later the small canoe-like craft was brought alongside the Sally J. The man climbed on deck and greeted us. He was a mestizo, and I supposed he had come aboard to act as a pilot. He talked hurriedly with Captain James, and the old skipper evidently agreed to what he was saying. From that time the mestizo was virtually in command of the Sally J., although Captain James acted as his mouthpiece.

Our prow was turned southward again. We steamed along the coast till just after noon and then our engines were stopped again. We merely rode the waves for the rest of the day.

There was no sail in sight, and the sea was like glass. All day a flock of sea birds had been following in our wake. Much to our disgust they never came within range of our rifles. Whitman was especially anxious to get a shot at one of the birds. He persuaded Captain James to allow us to lower the dingey and try if we could not get nearer them in it. The birds were just as shy of the dingey as they were of the steamer. They circled round us with maddening persistency, but always kept just out of range of our weapons. After several futile attempts to get within shooting distance, we gave up in despair and rowed back to the Sally J. We had nothing but blistered hands for our trouble.

Whitman, however, was not yet thoroughly convinced of the hopelessness of the undertaking. He requested Captain James to leave the dingey in tow. He said he would make another trial later in the evening. Captain James granted the request, though I thought he looked a little suspiciously at Whitman. He had never liked the man. The dingey was left towing behind at the end of a long rope. Whitman, however, made no further use of it.

A bank of clouds rolled up from the south just before nightfall. Soon they had spread over the entire heavens. At the same time the wind began to blow from the southwest. The moon would not rise till later in the night. As soon as darkness set in everything was covered with the deepest gloom.

It was not long after nightfall when Captain James ordered the dingey, which was still towing astern, to be brought on deck. The rope was drawn in, but no dingey was attached.

"What's this?" Captain James roared out with an oath. "A rope like that wear in two in four hours!"

The mate was examining the rope.

"This rope don't look like it had worn in two," he said. "I believe it's been cut, Captain."

Captain James ripped out another oath so fearful and so original that I envied him. He took the rope and examined it. It was plain that it had been cut with a knife or some sharp-edged instrument.

"Damn it all!" he roared. "There's some devil's work afoot!"

"Maybe the ghost done it," the mate suggested, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. He was pale and trembling. Evidently he really believed his facetious suggestion.

"Ghost be damned!" cried the angry skipper. "That looks like a ghost's work!"

The crew was immediately called to quarters. We feared that some one of them had taken it into his head to go and betray us to the authorities. The mystery only deepened; every member of the crew was present. They whispered together in awed accents.

Then more astounding than ever came the discovery that Whitman was missing! The cabin and staterooms were searched, but without avail. Whitman was not to be found. None of his things were gone; he alone was missing. It was plain to us now why he had wished the dingey left in tow.

"Whitman was an infernal spy," Captain James said with vehemence. "I never liked him, but I didn't think he was so bad as all that."

"I guess he was about as bad as they make 'em," I returned. It was hard to think of the bluff, free-hearted man as a traitor, but the evidence was convincing. I was forced to accept it. He himself had asked to have the dingey left in tow; the dingey had been cut loose; he alone of those on the Sally J. was missing. I could see no explanation but that he was a traitor. Did Carmencita know of this? I asked myself. Or was he deceiving her as he had deceived the rest of us?

Alarmed at this, we decided to await developments before we tried to land. Captain James paced up and down swearing and raging. The mestizo pilot was also ill at ease. But the night wore on, and nothing appeared to alarm us, so we became more at ease. At last Captain James and the mestizo decided to make a landing after all.

The Sally J. would that night anywhere have been rated as a decidedly suspicious craft. No lights whatever were visible about her. From all appearances she might have been some black phantom of the deep.

Far away to the west the lights of one lone vessel were just visible. In the east the bare hills and mountains along the coast of Peru were just visible, silhouetted upon the face of the skurrying clouds. We were steaming directly toward this coast. As we drew nearer and the coast loomed up in greater distinctness I began to feel afraid. The mestizo pilot, though, evidently knew his business. He kept his course with unerring confidence. There was a break in the bold shoreline and it was toward this that he was steering. It seemed to me, though, that we were rushing to certain destruction. But the Sally J. continued boldly onward, and, almost before I knew it, we were riding in a little half-sheltered cove.

Upon the sandy beach and back among the dark shadows were clusters of men. A number of boats were drawn up on the beach, ready to be launched. Some of Paramonte's troops were there to convey the supplies into the interior.

Half a dozen of the boats immediately put out from the shore. A rather elderly man in a sort of a light uniform was the first to reach the deck. I took him to be the officer in command of the expedition.

"You got in at last," the officer remarked, greeting Captain James and the mestizo.

"Yes, we got in," replied Captain James in very poor Spanish; "but get your men on here in a hurry and put 'em to work. It's clearin' up an' the moon's comin' up. We want to get away from here as soon as we can. Get a move on ye."

In a few minutes the deck of the Sally J. was fairly swarming with revolutionists. Boats were all around her. The hatches were quickly uncovered, and many of the men sprang down into the hold. These handed up the boxes of rifles, the cases of ammunition and the other stuff to those on deck. In turn they conveyed them to the boats, in which they were taken to the shore. Everybody worked with a will. Hour after hour they worked away, for the most part in silence.

In the meanwhile the clouds had disappeared, as if swept away by a magic broom. A brilliant white moon had risen, lighting up the scene. Captain James and the pilot did not like this. They hurried the work of unloading with all possible speed. Finally the last case of rifles and the last box of ammunition were conveyed to the shore. The officer I had first seen advanced toward us once more.

"General Paramonte said that you would have two passengers," he said.

"Only got one though now," the skipper said bluntly. "Here is Señor Garnack. The other one —a feller named Whitman—turned traitor. Garnack'll tell you about it. If you ever run across him blow his brains out and be done with it. But I want to get away. I don't like to run any more risk than I can help."

"Beggin' yer parding, Captain," interrupted the mate, who was peering through his glass, "but there's a gunboat steamin' down this way!"

The falling of a bomb in our midst could not have created more consternation than did this announcement.

"The hell you say!" gasped the Captain. He seized the glass from the mate's hand and peered through it eagerly.

A glimpse showed him that the mate had spoken the truth. A gunboat was coasting down toward us.

Those who yet remained on the deck of the Sally J. were quickly sent ashore. Major Barrez, the officer I had seen, and I followed in the last boat. In a few minutes I was on Peruvian soil. We had hardly left her when the Sally J.'s screw began churning the water. Under a full head of steam the filibuster passed out to the open sea. She still carried no lights, but she was plainly visible both to those on shore and to those on the gunboat.

The gunboat was but a small affair. In fact she was little more than a tug, with a cannon or two mounted on her deck. She was designed more for frightening smugglers than for any serious service. The Sally J. was steaming straight out to sea. The gunboat was trying to cut off her escape in this direction. There was a dangerous promontory a few miles south. The pilot evidently wanted to give this dangerous point a wide berth. The filibuster's engines were doing their best, but the gunboat, though small, was by no means slow. For awhile the race was close.

As the chase continued, it soon became evident that the Sally J. was the faster vessel. She steadily gained upon the gunboat and would have left her behind easily had not their courses narrowed down so rapidly. As it was, however, she just about held her own. The gunboat saw that she could not overtake the Sally J. in fair chase. By a well-executed maneuver, however, she was brought within range of the Sally J., but directly astern.

A puff of whitish smoke appeared at the bow of the gunboat. It was followed by the heavy boom of a cannon. Despairing of overtaking her by other means, the gunboat had fired upon the Sally J., hoping to cripple her. A considerable sea was running and the gunboat was tossing considerably. The shot flew wide of its mark.

The gunboat continued firing at intervals until the Sally J. was entirely out of range. Then, realizing that the chase was over, she turned and steamed back to the north. Unharmed, the Sally J. gradually disappeared from our sight.

CHAPTER V.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

I now had time to question Major Barrez concerning our surroundings. He soon outlined his plans to me. As is well known, the great railway of Southern Peru extends from the seaport of Mollendo, across the desert to Arequipa and thence on over the Andes to Puno on Lake Titicaca and to Santa Rosa further north. After leaving Mollendo it parallels the seacoast for several miles until the river Tambo is reached. Then, breaking through the range of abrupt hills that mark the seacoast, it changes its course entirely and starts off northeastward over the desert to Arequipa, the great city of the south, a hundred miles further inland.

The little village of Tambo is on the railroad, just at the point where the railroad leaves the river. Now Barrez's men had captured a train running from Mollendo to Arequipa, and, after having dumped out the little freight it was carrying and left the passengers in the desert to make their way out the best they knew how, they had brought it to Tambo with a string of empty cars. Now they meant to load the supplies on this train and convey them inland. Major Barrez's only fear was that the troops at Mollendo would hear of his raid and get to Tambo before the train got away.

Tambo was several miles northwest of where we had landed. All the time, however, a stream of pack animals were kept going to and from the village, bearing heavy loads. I wondered at the expedition with which this work was carried on. Already nearly half the supplies were at Tambo or on the way there.

Directly the sky along the summits of the eastern mountains grew lighter. In a few minutes a bright red disk appeared, and the bright rays of the sun fell upon the faces of the toiling men. My first Peruvian day was begun.

Immediately the heat grew severe, but the men worked silently at their tasks. But at last all the supplies were on their way, and with Major Barrez I started after them. It was midday when we at last arrived at Tambo.

The inhabitants of the village were thoroughly frightened by Major Barrez's show of force. They were quite submissive and aided us in every way possible. A line of pickets had been thrown out to the north. At any event troops coming from that direction would not be able to surprise us.

The train was composed of half a dozen flat cars and a little, rusty, wheezing, antiquated apology for an engine. At any rate, however antiquated the railroad might be, it was certainly better than carrying the stuff inland merely by pack train.

Steam was up in the engine, and the engineer was tightening his nuts and fixing things up generally. The train was ready to start as soon as the loading was finished. The men worked swiftly, and they were just finishing their work, when the distant report of a rifle floated to our ears. The report seemed to proceed from a point further north, but our view in that direction was cut off by a projecting spur of the coast hills. The railroad skirted around this spur.

The single report was quickly followed up by others, scattering but alarming. Of course it was our pickets who were being driven in by a force of government troops. The rattle of musketry grew louder. Evidently a considerable skirmish was in progress. Presently half a dozen excited figures appeared around the spur. They were running with all their might, yelling out that the government troops were coming.

Our men hurriedly grabbed up their weapons and swung into line. I don't know why, but Major Barrez was determined to fight. He did not think that the government troops were in force; and at any rate, as he said, if they were too many for us we could retire to the hills, where the government troops would be afraid to pursue us. He was an old fire-eater, anyhow, and wanted to fight for the sake of fighting. Certainly there was no necessity for it. He knew better than to risk the train load of supplies, though. They were to be sent on with about half the soldiers. I remained behind with Major Barrez and the others. I was as eager for a fight as was Major Barrez himself.

The order to move was given, and with a discordant shriek the old engine began to snort and wheeze. After several abortive attempts she got the train into motion. In a few minutes the train was out of sight.

Just as the train was lost from view the vanguard of the government troops appeared around the spur of the hill. Only the head of the column was in view. We could have no idea of the number of our assailants. Major Barrez did not think there were more than two or three companies of them. Our men began firing as soon as they came in sight, although the range was so great that most of the bullets fell short. The column immediately deployed and prepared to attack us. Our postion was a strong one. We were just on the outside of the village, on a slightly elevated bit of ground. The government troops would have to cross a perfectly open space to attack us. The railroad made a slight cut here. The greater portion of our line was intrenched in this cut. The Tambo River was on our left, and the precipitous hills upon our right. Here we awaited the assault.

As the government troops deployed they began to advance. They were slow about this, though, waiting evidently for the rest of their men to come up. They kept up a continual fire that made us keep pretty close under cover, but which otherwise did no harm.

All the time their men kept pouring around the spur of the hill at double quick time and deploying into line. When at last the troops were all up and the advance began in earnest, I judged that there were between two and three hundred of them. Our own men numbered about one hundred, perhaps some more. Major Barrez had not expected the attackers to be in such force. He was ill at ease, but it would not do to run away now. I was rather confident of our ability to withstand the attack, intrenched as we were in the cutting.

They came on confidently, going slowly at first, and then as our fire grew hotter, breaking into a quick, swinging trot. They did not expect much resistance. Our men kept up an irregular fire, but without much effect. Only occasionally a man dropped out of the ranks.

On they came, now wavering, now surging forward with renewed force, now halting to deliver their fire. Our fire was more destructive now. Those who dropped from the ranks were more numerous. The survivors only closed up the ranks and continued onward. On our side the men were sheltered by the railroad cut. They crouched there and pumped lead with surprising nonchalance. We had suffered no loss whatever so far.

They never looked back to see what loss they had suffered. Their eyes were centered up that railroad cut, with its line of rifles belching death and destruction. They came on with dogged persistence. Their line became thinner and thinner, but they never faltered. They did not move so swiftly now, and we were confident.

Sometimes they faltered and even retreated, but they always rallied and recovered the ground they had lost. Every few rods they would halt and fire a volley, but very few of our men were struck. Our rifles belched forth their defiance again and again, but we could not check their advance.

A few minutes more and they were swarming upon us. We were not prepared to give in tamely, though. We had hardly lost half a dozen men, and we were still confident. We sprang up and met them hand to hand. Nothing but the reports of rifles and revolvers, the wild cries of the combatants, the thud of the bayonets as they entered the flesh, the clash of swords, and the cries of the wounded and dying could be heard. Every man fought for himself. All order was lost in the general tumult of the battle.

We received manfully the terrific onslaught, and we succeeded in checking the advance of the government troops for a time. For some time neither side had the advantage. The fighting masses surged backwards and forwards through the low cut and over the ground about it.

At last the superior number of the government troops broke down our stubborn tenacity. Gradually they drove us back through the fields. Little by little, desperately contesting every foot of the way, we were forced to retreat. It looked as though we must be utterly defeated. A little way back we tried to make another stand. For a few minutes we managed to hold our own. We even forced the government troops back a little. We were encouraged by this and confidence increased. We might then have won the battle had not a new factor appeared in the fight.

A company or two of government troops had crossed the hills to the north, swung round till they reached the railroad, and now they came pouring along it upon our rear. The crack of their rifles was the first warning we had of their presence. Our position was now such that we were surrounded by the government troops on three sides with the river on the fourth. Major Barrez was at an end of his resources. We had not looked forward to this outcome of the fight.

The troops in our rear came sweeping down upon us, shooting and yelling. A sort of a panic came over our men. They had fought well till now, but now they huddled together like sheep. Many plunged into the river and swam to the opposite bank. They threw away their rifles and fled for dear life. The rest of us put up a decent show of resistance, but we knew that we must be crushed to pieces between the two detachments.

There was a moment's lull in the fighting, and then, in one grand irresistible rush, they swept down upon us from all directions. Our officers then lost what little vestige of authority they possessed up to this time. The ranks were broken. Every man was left to his own inclinations, to fight or run away, just as he chose. Few ran away, though, for in order to get away they would have to swim the river, and while doing so they presented tempting marks to sharpshooters. Government troops and revolutionists—all seemed to mingle in one indescribable and inextricable melee.

The soldiers on both sides fought more like demons than like men. I have never seen more terrific fighting, and I never want to see it. The weapons were used with appalling effect. The slaughter was terrific.

I took no part in the first portion of the fight, save as a spectator. In the desperate hand-to-hand struggle, however, I was suddenly whirled into the midst of the maelstrom of battle. A big, burly-looking officer strode up to me. I had my revolvers in my pockets, but no weapons were visible about me. The fellow concluded that I had been disarmed. He raised his sword to strike me down. I realized my danger. There must be no delay. I snatched a revolver from my pocket, and before the man's sword could descend I had it pointed at his breast. Then I pulled the trigger. The muzzle of the weapon was so close to his breast that the flash of the powder burned his greasy uniform. He fell backward, but whether dead or wounded I could not tell.

As the man fell, his sword, descending of its own weight, struck me a glancing blow across the face. A slight flesh wound was inflicted. It bled profusely, but was otherwise not of a serious nature. The blood trickled down over my face. Soon it was dyed a bright scarlet hue, giving me a most terrifying appearance. The sight of blood seemed to rouse every bit of my fighting nature and I was utterly reckless of danger. I secured the sword belonging to the man who had fallen, and threw myself into the thick of the fight.

From that time until the general advance of the government troops broke our ranks, I fought in the front rank, and I may say that I fought as well as any of our men.

We fought desperately, although we knew that it was useless. Some few of our men managed to cut their way out of the struggling mass and escaped to the hills. Not more than a fourth of our number escaped, though. Some few of the remainder had already been captured, but the most were still fighting.

Before long only about thirty of us remained. As if drawn by some magnet, we were all congregated about one point, surrounded on all sides by the government troops. There we made our last stand. We fought so well that for a time the men about us fell back. We had nothing to fight for. There was no hope of rescue or anything of the sort, but still we fought on. On the part of most of us, especially the Peruvians, it was perhaps because we knew that in all probability we would be shot as rebels if we surrendered. Better to die on the field than to stand blindfolded and have your body riddled.

Though opposed by overwhelming numbers, we held out stoutly for awhile. But those next to us were pressed on by those further away, and they closed about us. In spite of all our efforts, our circle was broken. Individually the men struggled bravely, but all those not killed were at last overpowered and made prisoners. The battle was over.

CHAPTER VI.

A SHORT-LIVED FREEDOM.

A detachment was left behind to bury the dead, but the main body of the government troops, together with the prisoners, moved off in the direction of Mollendo. There were about fifty of the prisoners. Major Barrez and myself were among them. Barrez was wounded in several places. His wounds were paining him considerable. He could hardly walk.

I was much crestfallen to think that I should be captured in my first battle upon Peruvian soil. It was a very inauspicious beginning.

We were closely guarded on our march to Mollendo, but no outbreak occurred. I kept idly glancing over the faces of the men around me. Directly my attention was called to one of them who wore no uniform. He seemed to possess considerable authority among the officers of the expedition. He was consulting with the colonel in command when I first saw him. His back was turned toward me. Somehow his figure was dimly familiar, but for the time I was unable to recall where I had seen him.

Directly he turned so that I could see his face. Then it all came upon me like a flash of light in darkness. This ununiformed man of authority was none other than the man I had seen lowering himself into the hold of the Sally J. when she lay in San Francisco harbor.

The man recognized me at the same time. He turned excitedly to the colonel and jabbered something to him, with frequent gestures in my direction. The colonel glanced keenly at me and nodded. The man seemed satisfied.

So the figure I had seen was not a phantom after all. It did not take me long to arrive at the conclusion that this man had played an important part in sending the gunboat after the Sally J. and the subsequent attack of the government troops. I decided that he had worked in collusion with Whitman. I looked about more closely, thinking that Whitman himself might be with the troops. I could see nothing of him.

After a march of several hours we arrived at Mollendo, a place of considerable size, doing the shipping business of nearly all Southern Peru and a great portion of that of Bolivia. It was now well along toward evening.

The troops were drawn up in the plaza for the benefit of the people. The people, however, did not seem at all pleased with the outcome of the fight. Some few cheered the soldiers, it is true; but for the most part they either hooted them or remained sulkily silent. The colonel chewed his lip in chagrin.

We prisoners were immediately marched away under a small guard. People lined the streets, and the balconies of most of the houses were occupied. Some of the people were cheering, but it was the prisoners they cheered, not the troops. Pretty women waved their handkerchiefs and tossed us kisses.

At last we were stowed away in cells in what I took to be the city jail. There were stone walls and guards all around us. Escape, I thought, was impossible.

The guards were disposed to treat us kindly. They had heard how we fought, and they respected us for our valor. They supplied us with water in basins, so that we could wash the blood and grime from our hands and faces and bathe our wounds. There were three in the cell with me. All of us had wounds to show, but none of them was serious.

One of my fellow prisoners, a reckless, dissipated young fellow, had a smattering knowledge of surgery. He had been a student at the great school of medicine at Arequipa; but he had got into some trouble there and had been forced to join the rebels or risk being sent to prison. He doctored our wounds as well as the limited resources at our command permitted.

We got nothing whatever to eat that evening. When night came the others dozed off, but I could not sleep on account of the filthiness of the place. The hours dragged by slowly. I tried hard to go to sleep, but could not.

I lay there meditating upon the uncertainties of a soldier's life, when suddenly I thought I heard a key being inserted in the lock of the door of our cell. I started up in alarm. A hundred wild thoughts went coursing through my mind. I had read of where brutal jailers, wishing to get rid of their prisoners, had murdered them, and then attributed their death to suicide. I was badly frightened. I started to wake my sleeping companions, but an impulse told me not to do it. I waited in suspense.

The key grated in the lock and I heard the click of the bolt as it fell back. Then the door was swung cautiously open. Two figures appeared in the doorway, dim and shadowy.

"The only foreigner I noticed particularly is in here," a voice said in an undertone. "Most likely he is your man."

"Most likely."

"Señor Garnack!" another voice spoke in a little louder tone. At the same time the men peered anxiously into the cell.

I was mightily surprised. I had not been in Peru a day, and I did not think a single soul, save perhaps some of the men imprisoned with me, knew my name. Yet here was a man calling me by name. I could not remember ever having heard his voice before. I rose on my elbow and peered at the man.

"Who the devil are you?" I growled roughly.

"Hush! Not so loud!" whispered the man, with a warning gesture. "You are Señor Garnack?"

"That's my name. What do you want with me?"

"*Bueno!* This is our man!" exclaimed the fellow, taking me by the hand. "You must follow me," he added to me.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Never mind. I was sent to get you out of here and I'm going to do it. You must follow me."

His tone carried confidence with it. Greatly bewildered, I scrambled to my feet. None of my fellow prisoners was awakened. The stranger led me out of the cell. As soon as we were out, the other man closed and locked the door. There was a guard at the further end of the corridor, but he had discreetly turned his back. I began to understand that I was to be taken from the prison. Without a word the two men conducted me along the corridor. At the door a couple of guards challenged us. The second man spoke a word or two, the guards saluted, the door was opened, and we passed out into the street.

The one who had spoken to the guard now left us, and returned to the prison. The other led me in silence along the streets for several blocks. I was greatly puzzled as to who this man was and what he meant to do. I was sure that I had never seen him before. Was I free or was I merely being transferred to something worse? Glancing up into his face, I saw that the man was regarding me with an amused smile.

"You consider this a rather strange proceeding, eh, Señor Garnack?" he remarked.

"I don't see anything about it that is not strange. I am completely at sea."

"I guess I had better explain. My name is Helaraz. You are now out of prison and I mean that you shall stay out. I got you out, yet I never saw you until I saw you in that cell. That's a little strange, eh?"

"It certainly is."

"However, I am merely the ambassador of a higher power. You will get to meet that power personally after awhile. She will be glad to see you. Doubtless you will be glad to see her."

Señor Helaraz was regarding me with a quizzical smile. I was more puzzled than ever. Who was this strange woman who had sent him to get me out of prison? I knew but one woman in Peru, and that was Carmencita. And for the past few weeks I had been striving to erase her face from my memory. Yet a vague hope that it was Carmencita took hold of me.

"As for the rest," continued Señor Helaraz, "it wasn't hard. The prison is in charge of Señor Raston. He is a friend of mine. I persuaded him to let you out. They will not notice one prisoner missing among them all. You don't want me to go into details, eh? The bare fact that you are out is enough for you now."

We walked for some distance, meeting no one. The streets were deserted. Señor Helaraz was chatting gaily all the time. Then he led the way to a house and we entered. All the other houses were enveloped in darkness, but there was a light in this one. As we entered the patio the light dazzled me for a moment. I heard a glad little cry and the frou frou of a woman's skirts as she advanced toward me. There was no mistaking that voice. It was Carmencita.

"Here is the woman who sent me on a cavalier's errand," said Helaraz, gaily.

Carmencita's pretty face was aglow, and a happy light was dancing in her eyes. She laid both her little hands in mine and glanced up into my face, tenderly—lovingly, I thought. I remembered our parting in San Francisco and wondered.

"Oh, I am so glad!" she exclaimed. "I saw you with the prisoners this afternoon. I did not know what to do. But uncle has got you away. I am so glad."

"I am glad, too—glad to be free and—for other things, Carmencita."

I had never called her Carmencita before. She flushed a little, but her eyes sparkled with a heavenly light. She did not withdraw her hands; and she did not seem at all displeased.

"Tell me about how you came to be captured," she said.

Thereupon I told the story of the battle for the benefit of Carmencita and Señor Helaraz. Their anxiety was somewhat relieved when they learned that the train carrying the supplies that the Sally J. had landed had got away safely. A different report was current in the town. When I had finished Carmencita remained silent with her eyes downcast, meditating upon something. Then she looked up, and her face whitened perceptibly.

"And Señor Whitman?" she asked with a little catch. "Was he captured, or what?"

I hesitated a moment. I remembered that Whitman had declared to me that Carmencita was engaged to marry him. I believed now that she loved me.

"Señor Whitman disappeared," I said, "just before we landed."

"Disappeared?" Carmencita gasped.

"We had been shooting at birds during the day. He asked to have the boat left in tow. That was done. Just after nightfall the boat was gone. It had been cut loose. Whitman was the only man missing."

"What do you make of his disappearance?" Señor Helaraz asked.

"We were of the opinion that he was hired to betray the Sally J. Of course the coming of the gunboat and of the troops confirmed us in the belief that he had betrayed us."

"It does look strange."

"Señor Whitman was not a spy," said Carmencita earnestly. "I know him well enough to know that."

"Perhaps not; but circumstances point that way."

"I won't pretend to offer any solution, but I am sure that his disappearance can be explained."

"I hope that it can be explained. I always liked him. But things looked pretty black for him."

"I know that he did not betray the expedition."

I was irritated at the vigor with which Carmencita defended Whitman. Did she really love this fellow, or did she really love me, or, the thought struck me, was she playing the coquette with us both. I could not decide.

Directly we all retired. In spite of my fatigue, the joy that I was out of prison and all, I did not sleep much. I was constantly thinking of Carmencita and what a dear woman she was.

Señor Helaraz, I had learned, was an uncle of Carmencita's, having married one of Paramonte's sisters. Carmencita was staying with him, while her father was with the army. Paramonte was now up in the mountains somewhere near Arequipa, but Helaraz could not tell just where.

Señor Helaraz came to my chamber the next morning just after I had dressed myself. We conversed earnestly for some time. I saw immediately that Señor Helaraz wanted to get me away from Mollendo as soon as possible. The evening before he had said lightly that my escape would not be noticed on account of the number of the prisoners, but now I could see that he was far from feeling the confidence that his words had expressed. I told him that I wanted to join Paramonte's army in the interior, if possible. He said that it would probably be for the best.

We had soon formulated a plan. The principal difficulty was to get out of the city without being recognized. An agent of Paramonte lived a few miles in the country. Through his aid I could easily join Paramonte.

Señor Helaraz was nervous. He wanted to start right away. I think he was afraid that my escape would be noticed, and that his part of the matter might come out. So we decided to start immediately. He got the carriage ready while I took leave of Carmencita. She was affected by the parting, and I came near pouring the whole story of my love into her ears. However, I restrained myself to a few kind, sympathetic words, and a promise to see her again when the opportunity offered.

The more open a plan is often the more easily it escapes detection. We were working on this supposition, and I was to accompany Señor Helaraz in an open carriage, and he would drive me to the home of the Paramonte sympathizer, who would manage to get me into the interior. There were few people on the street, but I tried to conceal my face as much as possible. I was rather fearful, but

Señor Helaraz was confident and he kept chatting gaily.

The streets about us were quiet, but we could hear shouts and yells in the distance. Señor Helaraz became uneasy. The noise increased as we proceeded, and directly we came upon the cause of it. Just ahead of us, a number of soldiers appeared, marching along a street running at right angles with the one we were following. Immediately behind them, and guarded on both sides by the soldiers, the prisoners were marching along. Had it not been for Señor Helaraz I should have been among them.

We drew up at the corner to wait for the procession to pass. Two more carriages were crowding up behind us. The street was narrow and we could not have turned back, had we desired to do so. The sidewalks were lined with men, women and children, hooting the troops and cheering the prisoners. Some overbold fellows even went so far as to shy rocks at the soldiers. Affairs were assuming a serious aspect.

"They're going to take the prisoners somewhere else," commented Señor Helaraz. *"Bueno!* It's lucky you got out last night. It looks like the whole town was up against the troops. The troops are afraid—afraid of a mob. A mob fights hard sometimes, though I reckon they were afraid the people would break open the jail and take you fellows out. *Dios,* who knows but that they might do it? I suppose they'll send your comrades to Lima to be shot. *Dios,* they're afraid to shoot 'em here. If they did we would have a little taste of hell here.

Ah, *amigo,* you have escaped more than you realize."

The procession of soldiers and prisoners was of considerable length. All the time they were passing, the crowds along the street were growing thicker.

I could see from the black looks of the soldiers that they did not like this. They longed to pour a volley into that hooting mob and disperse it. However, they restrained their impulses and marched on in dogged silence. They kept a strict watch on the prisoners, lest, encouraged by the demonstrations of the people, they should make a break for liberty. The officers in command knew their business. They paid no attention to the cries. They were treading on a powder mine. A single shot would touch off the mine and a fearful riot would ensue.

At last the procession was about passed. Two or three officers were marching along close to our carriage. Glancing at them, a thrill of fear ran through me as I recognized one of them as the phantom of San Francisco harbor. I started up in alarm. The fellow happened to glance up and he saw me. I tried to hide my face, but he recognized me. He turned to the officers and said something, indicating me by an excited gesture. The officers were astonished, and then sprang toward the carriage.

Señor Helaraz saw that I had been recognized. With a malediction he tried to force the horses forward, but one of the officers had grasped the bridles and the horses only reared and plunged. My only hope now lay in flight. I sprang from the carriage and started to run. The crowd hampered my movements. I had not gone ten steps when a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder. I was not armed and could make no resistance. The game was up. Two other officers and the man who had recognized me quickly joined my captor.

They hurried me back through the crowd to where the column of soldiers had halted. I was powerless to resist. The mob at first did not comprehend the scene. My last hope lay in it, though.

"Help me," I cried out, appealing to them.

They looked at us doubtfully for a moment. Then two or three of them sprang forward. A sword flashed in the air, and one fellow was howling with a handless arm. A pistol cracked and another was dancing around like a wild Indian with his hand clasped to his shoulder. The officers knew that the situation was critical, and they jerked me forward. In a moment we were in the midst of the soldiers.

The tension was broken at last. In a minute, sticks and stones were flying through the air. Two or three shots rang out above the tumult. They were fired from the sidewalks. A soldier dropped in the ranks a few paces ahead.

The officers restrained their men no longer. The exasperated soldiers threw up their rifles, and the next moment the cries and the tumult were drowned in their roar. Shrieks of pain were mingled with the cries of rage and the crack of the rifles. The soldiers laughed grimly. They realized the folly of the mob. The prisoners made no attempt to escape. They knew that any attempt would be their death warrant. They would be massacred rather than be allowed to escape.

No second volley was needed. The crowds which had lined the streets melted away as if by magic. Only a few of the killed and wounded remained to tell the tale. The others were fleeing for dear life. The street was deserted. The soldiers only laughed grimly and continued their march. The mob was effectually broken up. They were not molested any further.

CHAPTER VII.

WHITMAN TURNS UP.

We were marched straight down to the water front and out onto a wharf. Most of the prisoners were relieved when we got there. For my own part I was not caring much for anything. I had had freedom in my grasp and had let it fall through my fingers. I ought to have been out of Mollendo, free, and here I was on my way to some prison instead. I wondered what Carmencita would think. She had contrived to get me out of the hands of the government, and I had contrived to get back in them again. But there was no helping it now.

We were driven like sheep aboard a small tug which was waiting there to receive us. We were stowed away in the hold of the tug. The hold was a foul enough place, but it was hardly so bad as I had expected. There were no portholes, but the hatches were kept open.

There was quite a number of soldiers aboard the tug, and they watched us vigilantly. We were bad revolutionists, ripe for any rash act. We did not remain long at the wharf. In a few minutes the tug was under way.

All the men who had been taken prisoners yesterday were now on the tug. I glanced over them, and recognized Major Barrez and one or two others. In a moment my attention was attracted to a man sitting at one side, with his head forlornly supported on his palms. His hat was pulled down over his face, and in the dim light I was unable to recognize his figure. In a moment he looked up. Our eyes met. His face lit up with incredulous surprise, and he uttered a low cry of amazement. I, too, was amazed. The recognition was mutual.

"Garnack!" exclaimed the man.

"Whitman!" I cried.

To say that I was surprised is to greatly underrate my feelings. Here was mystery and it puzzled me.

"What the devil is it that's brought you here?" I gasped.

"And how in the name of God do you come to be here?" Whitman asked in the same breath.

"We were attacked by a regiment of government troops from Mollendo early yesterday morning. The train got away safe with Paramonte's supplies. We were cut to pieces. Those of us who weren't killed were captured. It was a devilish tough fight. The Sally J. was chased after she had landed her cargo. She got away, though."

"Are you telling me the truth?" Whitman asked.

"Of course I'm telling you the truth," I replied. "You ought to know it well enough without being told at all. You——"

I could go no further.

"This is the work of that infernal spy!" he exclaimed, clenching his fingers.

"Of course it is the work of a spy," I returned. "And you——" I stopped short again. I was thinking rapidly. Since his disappearance I had been confident that it was Whitman who had betrayed, or at least helped to betray, the expedition into the hands of the government authorities. But if this were the case, then why was he thus confined in the hold of this infernal prison ship, like any other prisoner? It seemed that he should have been honored and feted. The more I thought of it, the more puzzling the mystery became.

Then plausible explanations flashed upon me in rapid succession. Perhaps he had refused to carry out some other dangerous or undesirable task which had been imposed upon him, and had been cast away for this refusal. This was certainly a very flimsy pretext for imprisoning a man. Perhaps the fellow was even now merely pretending to be a prisoner. Appearing to be a comrade, he might worm much information out of the prisoners which would be of value to the government. I liked this explanation best. Anyhow, I would show Whitman that I was not blind as to his purpose.

"Whitman," I said, speaking bluntly and to the point, "your little game's up. You can't play any more of your monkey tricks on me. You may have some lie fixed up, but I know devilish well that you are a spy in the employ of the Peruvian government. More, I know it was you that betrayed our expedition."

Whitman had risen, but now he started back as if stung by a scorpion. I never saw a man better simulate injured innocency. Either Whitman was not a guilty man, or else he was a most consummate actor.

"You say that I betrayed the expedition?" he repeated, as if he could not believe what he had heard. His haggard cheeks flushed hotly.

"That's what I said," I returned grimly, though I was beginning to have my doubts.

"Surely, Garnack, you did not suspect me of that," he returned. "You? I thought you were my friend."

"Well, I'm not your friend," I returned doggedly, "and I did suspect you. If you didn't betray the expedition, then why in the name of heaven did you get into the dingey—you know devilish well that you yourself asked Captain James to leave it in tow—why did you get into the dingey, then cut the rope and leave us without any explanation? I'd like for you to explain that. Oh, you infernal spy!"

Whitman sprang forward threateningly. His hands were clenched and his eyes flashed.

"You insult me!" he cried, and he made as if to strike me.

For my part, I don't believe I moved a muscle.

"It's all very well to strike me when you've doubtless got all these soldiers behind you to keep me from striking back," I said.

My words stayed his rage. His hands fell to his sides.

"You do me an injustice, Garnack," he said. "I can explain."

I laughed.

"Of course you can," I said. "You wouldn't be here if you didn't have some yarn fixed up."

"Believe me, Garnack, I am no traitor."

"Maybe not. Anyhow, go on with your story. Let's see what sort of a lie you can manufacture."

"As there is a God in heaven above me," said Whitman, earnestly, "everything that I tell you is true."

"Go on."

"Circumstances certainly were against me, but I never thought you fellows would take me for a traitor. Just after dark, night before last, I was standing on the deck of the Sally J., near the stern. The rest of you were at supper. I didn't think there was anybody on deck but me. I thought I heard a step behind me. I turned round, expectin' to see you or somebody. A strange man was there, though. He was a ferocious lookin' big sailor. I thought of the ghost and shivered. Tried to yell, but the words stuck in my mouth. I was half scared to death. The man was the livest ghost I ever saw. I couldn't say a thing till he was upon me. I am a purty strong man, but I was like a pigmy in his hands. His arms were like steel. I couldn't throw him off. He got me on my back and choked me till I thought I was going to die sure. He stuffed a dirty handkerchief in my mouth. None of you fellows heard the noise. He tied my hands and feet. I couldn't do anything then. I thought then that the mate was on the bridge, but I can't say for certain. If he was, he never noticed us. The man caught hold of the rope fastened to the dingey, and pulled it up close to the stern. He left me where I was for a minute. Then he got a new idea. 'The very thing,' I heard him say. He then picked me up and put me down into the boat. I was all in a heap. I couldn't move or yell or anything. He followed me into the boat. Then he cut the rope.

"The Sally J. was goin' slow at the time, but she shot off into the gloom and left us alone. The dingey simply drifted till we couldn't see or hear the Sally J. Then he cut my hands and feet loose, and pushed me into a seat and put oars in my hands. Then he pulled out a big revolver and ordered me to row. I did row. He held the revolver in one hand and steered with the other. The boat rocked and tossed till I was half scared to death. He had to put up his gun and bail the water out. It's a wonder to me why we didn't sink or capsize a hundred times. The man knew just where he was. I don't know how he found it out, but he did. Most likely he had heard Captain James say something about it. He brought us straight to Mollendo. They took me and put me in a cell in one of their infernal prisons. They kept me there till this mornin', and then some soldiers came to take me away. They brought me here. But let me tell you, Garnack, I never was so surprised as when I saw you here."

"You couldn't have been much more surprised than I was."

I did not know whether to believe Whitman's story or not. It was strange, but it had a ring of truth about it. It might only be a daring lie, though. I told him that I believed him, and that I was sorry I had ever suspected him. At the same time I resolved to watch him.

The atmosphere of the hold was foul, and at intervals we prisoners were allowed to come on deck. It was only for a short time and in small groups, though.

Along about the middle of the afternoon my turn came. With two or three others I was brought on deck. The day was very beautiful. We were clinging close to the shore. There was a point just ahead which did not seem to be more than half a mile away. I was standing near the rail, gazing out toward the barren coast and wondering if I could jump overboard and swim to it. Suddenly there came a great cry from somewhere forward. One of the soldiers had been leaning over the rail, watching a school of fishes, when he had lost his balance and fallen overboard.

Pandemonium immediately ensued. Everybody began yelling to everybody else, and nothing could be heard above the din. Everybody ran to the rail to see what had become of the unfortunate soldier. The engines were stopped, but the tug continued onward of her own momentum. The soldier soon came to the surface, directly astern. He struggled wildly, beating the water into foam in his violent but vain efforts to keep on top.

"Help! help!" he yelled frantically.

"He can't swim! Don't you see?" yelled the commander of the tug. "Why don't some of you help him?"

There were no life buoys or such modern appliances on board the tug. The fellow's comrades only shook their heads. They were not going to risk their lives.

A brilliant thought suddenly came to my mind. I might jump overboard and swim to land. In the excitement my absence would not be noticed. I sprang to the rail. Just as I sprang overboard, some one saw me.

"Stop him! Stop him! He's escaping!" he yelled out.

I realized that my plan had failed. In a moment the rail was lined with faces on this side. The soldier who had fallen overboard was forgotten. Half-a-dozen rifles were pointed at my head. One or two shots were fired at me, probably as a warning, but none of them touched me.

I realized now that I had done a very rash thing. I was about to give up and return to the tug and surrender, when a new thought struck me. Changing my direction, I swam with strong stroke toward where the soldier had last appeared. I would cover my attempt at escape with a cloak of magnanimous heroism, and get myself out of a bad scrape.

The soldiers on the tug saw what I meant to do. They did not fire any more shots after me, but cheered me instead. I was soon at the spot where the man had disappeared. In a moment his head appeared above the water.

I grasped him by the collar of his coat and held his head above water. He was thoroughly exhausted, and remained a dead weight on my hands. A boat had been launched and was coming toward us. It was all I could do to hold the fellow's head above water. Once we both disappeared entirely. However, I managed to hold out until the boat arrived. I grasped it with my free hand. The men in the boat dragged the soldier on board. I clambered in after him.

The exhausted soldier held his hand out to me. I managed to grasp it with a sufficient degree of ardor.

"Perhaps I may do as much for you some time," he said.

"It was nothing."

I was an unconscionable hypocrite. The poor fellow evidently believed that I had unselfishly risked my life to save his,

CHAPTER VIII.

MYSTERY ADDED TO MYSTERY.

The prisoners differed in their opinions concerning where we were being taken. Some thought one place and some another. Major Barrez's opinion was that we were to be taken to the great state prison at Lima. The soldiers about us were mute as clams, and we could learn nothing from them.

The little tug steamed along pretty steadily until near nightfall. She was a very slow vessel, and did not make much speed any of the time. Late in the evening, however, she ran into the harbor of a small village at which coasting vessels stopped occasionally. This was Quilca, at one time the principal port of Arequipa. We were not disembarked, but remained on the steamer through the night. The next morning the tug was brought up to the shambling old wharf. The prisoners were ordered out of the hold, and formed into an awkward line on deck. Major Barrez and one or two others were so badly wounded that they would not be able to march on foot with the main body. They were taken ashore first and mounted upon sleepy-looking mules.

The rest of us were then marched ashore between the lines of soldiers. Almost the entire population of the town was turned out to watch us as we were taken through. I heard many exclamations of surprise, execration and pity from the crowds. The prisoners marched along haughtily with their heads in the air, as became desperate revolutionists.

Leaving the town we started out on a narrow road, which led directly into the interior. The road was little more than a mule path. It was desperately rough. When we were out of the town some of the guards became more talkative. I learned that we were to be taken to Arequipa. The great Santa Rossa prison was located there. It was to this prison that we were being taken. We would have been sent to Arequipa by the railroad, but the officers wanted to fool the people and make them think we had been taken further north.

With occasional digressions, our road followed the banks of a small river. The country was far from inviting, especially off the river. On the desert there was no vegetation, except here and there a scrubby algarrobo. It was all one vast desert waste upon which rain never fell. There was nothing to relieve the monotony of the scenery except the mountains in the distance. It was always the same expanse of dry, burning, dazzling sand and rock. The sun beat down upon us with unexampled power. Now and then a lizard would be seen crawling over the hot sand, but that was the only indication of life. The region was not thickly populated, even in the valley. We did not see more than a dozen haciendas during the entire journey.

We traversed about twenty-five miles that day. This was a long march under the circumstances. We remained at a small village that night. There were no disturbances during the night. We were on the way early the next morning.

We were drawing nearer the mountains now, and in the clear morning light the scenery was grand. The mighty snow-capped peaks of the Andes stood out in clear, bold outlines against the deep blue background. Nearer, the foot ranges, clothed with their dark forests, only accentuated the majesty of the more distant mountains.

All through this day our march was continued. About three o'clock on the evening of the fourth day from leaving Quilca, we arrived at Arequipa. This is the greatest city in Southern Peru, and, after Lima, the greatest in all Peru. It is a solidly built place, beautifully situated at the foot of the mighty mountain Misti, which towers for fourteen thousand feet above the city.

Santa Rossa prison, in which we were to be incarcerated, was just outside the limits of the city. The prison house proper was a large building of hard stone, cut in great blocks. The massive walls and little, iron-barred windows gave it a most forbidding appearance. It was surrounded by a thick stone wall, some fifteen feet high. There were guards all around it. The whole place had a very formidable and military aspect.

My heart sank within me as I realized that our chances for escape from behind those thick walls were very slim indeed. We were met at the gate of the courtyard by the jailer and some of the guards. The jailer grinned in his own savage manner when we were delivered into his charge. As the great iron gates clanged shut behind us, we realized that the gates of the world had closed, and for many of us they were never to be opened again. We were hurried across the courtyard into the prison. Here we were in a narrow corridor with a row of cells on either hand. At different places as we passed along the corridor, cell doors were thrown open and some of the prisoners shoved into the cells. Often they were already occupied by one or two men. Whitman was placed in the first cell opened.

I was taken along nearly to the end of the corridor, and there halted. The guards entered into a whispered consultation, then opened the door of a cell and thrust me into it. The iron door was slammed shut. I heard the rasping of the key in the lock and the retreating footsteps of the guards. For the first time in my chequered career, I occupied a prison cell.

The cell was not large, about six by nine feet. It was lighted by a single window, only a few inches wide, and set between massive blocks of stone. The door was of iron, strong and secure. The cell was just about as secure as it could be made.

I took in all this before I noticed that the cell had another occupant than myself. But, notwithstanding that I had failed to notice it, it was true. The other man was seated upon a rough stool. He was staring at the floor, a very picture of despair. He had not seen me at all.

He was a slightly built young man, and although his care-worn countenance made him appear somewhat older, I judged that he was not more than twenty-five. His hair was light. This was sufficient to stamp him as a foreigner. He was completely absorbed in his gloomy meditations.

In a dim way his face was familiar. In a moment it all came to me. This was the man whose picture Whitman had shown me at San Francisco. The face was haggard and worn, but it was the same. This man was the missing Jack Whitman!

"Jack Whitman, as I'm alive!" I exclaimed unguardedly.

The fellow sprang to his feet at my words. His countenance showed alarm and fear. He peered keenly into my face, but the glance did not seem to satisfy him in the least.

"Which of the devil's imps are you to hound me here?" he cried, hoarsely.

I made no reply to this greeting, but edged away. I began to believe that I had been imprisoned with a raving lunatic. As he saw this, the young man seemed to hesitate. When he spoke again it was in a lower key.

"Are you a detective?" he asked.

"No, I'm not a detective," I returned, quickly. "I came to Peru to aid in a rebellion against the government. We fought a battle with the government troops down near Mollendo. I was taken prisoner and brought here."

"I thought you were one of those detectives who are dogging me," he explained with a weak laugh.

"You are Jack Whitman, are you not?"

"That's what they call me. But how do you come to know me? You never saw me before, did you?"

"No, I never did, but I've seen your picture."

"That's it, is it? And do you know—everything?"

"Yes, I fancy that I know everything. Your home used to be in Carton, state of Illinois. You got to running with a set of wild fellows and got in debt for gambling. You stole the bank's money.

When the crime came out you fled. You went first to San Francisco, and then you came to Peru."

Jack's face was pale as death. His hands were clenched.

"Hold on!" he fairly screamed. "You are a detective! You have followed me here! And I have given myself into your hands! Great God! what shall I do?"

I half expected Jack to attack me in his tigerish ferocity, but he managed to restrain his anger.

"No, my friend," I said, speaking as calmly as I was able, "you are again mistaken. Once more, let me assure you that I am no detective."

"Then who in God's name are you?"

"I am Richard Rallston Garnack, adventurer, very much at your service," I returned with a mock bow.

"Then if you are not a detective, why in the name of heaven have you dogged me to this place?"

"I have not dogged you here. I was placed here very much against my own inclination. If it were possible, you may rest assured that I would lose no time in getting away from here. But I fancy I would have welcome news for you, if we were only out of this prison."

"I don't know what welcome news anyone could have for me," Jack returned with a harsh laugh.

"It concerns a certain Nellie Raymond, who, I understand, was a sweetheart of yours."

"What do you know of her?" Jack asked eagerly.

"Simply that she wants to find out where you are, and then that she wants to join you."

Jack was silent for several minutes.

"She was a dear girl," he said at last, with tears in his eyes, "and God knows I am not worthy of her. And she wishes to join me, criminal though I am? If it only could be so! Great God! why is it that I have to languish in this prison? She wishes it, and why can't I join her?"

"I only wish that we could find some way to get out of this place," I said.

"There's no use wishing it," Jack returned with a sigh of resignation. "I've been here long enough to know now that we can't get out."

"We can at least hope."

"Hope won't cut through these walls."

A short silence ensued. We were both absorbed in our meditations.

"How did you learn all this about me, if you never saw me?" Jack asked suddenly. "Have you seen Nellie? Did she send you down here to hunt me up?"

"No, I never saw her. Your brother showed me the photograph. He is in this prison now. He came here in search of you."

Jack gave a little cry of astonishment.

"My brother, did you say?"

"Yes, your brother," I replied, wondering what was the matter.

"Great God! what can this mean?"

"What's the matter? I don't understand."

"I am an only child. I have no brother."

"You have no brother!" I echoed, incredulously.

"I have no brother," Jack repeated. "I am an only child. Both my parents are dead."

For a few minutes I was too much surprised to speak. The silence became oppressive. I broke it by explaining how Whitman had so mysteriously disappeared from the Sally J., and so mysteriously reappeared on the coaster, and the surprising tale he told.

"What sort of looking man was he?" Jack asked.

I described him.

"I don't know of anybody who answers that description. There's one thing certain, though. He's not my brother."

"But what can it all mean?" I continued, vastly puzzled. "What reason could anyone have for palming himself off as your brother?"

"I can't imagine, unless the fellow was a detective who has come down here to hunt me up. If he's a detective, I suppose it's all up with me—that is, if you're right in supposing him to be connected with the government."

Evidently Jack was in mortal fear of detectives.

"He didn't look like a detective."

"Then what could he be?"

"I don't know. Surely he didn't palm himself off as your brother merely for the sake of getting on the Sally J., and betraying her to the government."

"I don't suppose he did."

"He seemed to want to emphasize the part that Miss Raymond played. Maybe she sent him to hunt you up."

"But why did he want to say he was my brother?"

"I can't explain it. But how do you come to be in this infernal hole?"

"It isn't much of a story," Jack returned, "but I'll tell it. My one desire was to get as far away from the United States as possible. I came to Lima. I ran across Señor Paramonte here. He took a liking to me, and asked me to join him. I was ready for anything, so I joined. Just after that I wrote my last letter back to Carton to Nellie. We were out reconnoitering one day, when I was captued. I was brought here, and I've been here ever since."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE FROM SANTA ROSSA.

Jack and I had become the very best of friends. I was very tired, and I slept soundly that night. I was awake at daybreak, however, feeling much fresher than I had felt the evening before. Jack now threw off his moroseness. He laughed and jested in the very best of spirts.

Jack was relating some amusing anecdote when a man entered with our dinners upon two tin platters. The meal was wretchedly cooked, but we prepared to devour it. We were hungry as bears. The man stared at us with distinct disapproval, while Jack finished his aneccdote and I burst into a roar of laughter.

"You fellows had better be saying your prayers," he muttered. "*Dios!* this conduct don't seem right for people who are going to be shot."

I felt myself turning pale. His words brought a horrible possibility to my mind. I had been aiding in a revolution against the government. They would be justified in shooting me!

"What do you mean?" I asked. "We are not to be shot, are we?"

"Of course you are to be shot," he returned. "What else could you expect?"

"But we haven't had a trial," I persisted.

"We don't try revolutionists," he said with a laugh. "We shoot them."

"Then when are we to be shot?"

"Oh, I don't know. Not all of you at one time, they say. Some to-morrow, some the next day and so on. Sort of a continuous performance. You don't object, I hope."

With a leering grin the man left, and the door was locked. I stared at Jack, and Jack stared at me. Neither spoke. This was a new sensation. We were to be shot as traitors! And it might be to-morrow! Of course they had a perfect right to shoot us; no one would deny that. This was to be the end of my little life drama. I had little foreseen this gloomy end when I accepted Paramonte's glowing offer. He had promised to make me great among men; and here I was in a prison cell, a captured revolutionist, condemned to be shot. There was nothing to hope for. Unconsciously my mind wandered back to Carmencita. Would she care when she heard of my death? A great lump rose in my throat and choked me.

All our mirth was effectually killed. The stone walls of the cell echoed no laugh now. We scarcely spoke a word during the entire day. We were overcome by the suddenness of the thing. We could only sit there and stare at each other.

The sun went down and darkness settled upon the earth. It might be that we would never see another sunset. I tried to sleep during the night, but I did not succeed very well. Along towards morning, I dozed off, but my slumbers were so full of visions of scaffolds and executions and all the horror of death that I was glad when I awoke and found it all a dream.

It had all come so suddenly, so unexpectedly!

But a few days ago I was alive to all the hope of a brilliant future, and now I was condemned to death! I had faced death before, but never in this form. I could hardly conceive of what the death was to be. Would I suffer? Great God! I knew that the pain of death could not be greater than the agony of suspense that now possessed me. I did not think of what the future would be. I did not realize that I would in an instant fathom the mysteries of a future existence and appear before the God of the universe. I did not recall or repent the dark deeds of my chequered past; I had only an all-consuming curiosity to know what death would be like. And perhaps I would know before many hours passed!

Directly I heard men tramping about in the corridor without. Doubtless they had come for those who were to be shot this morning. I held my breath in suspense, but they did not enter our cell. When their footsteps died away it was as if a great weight had been lifted from my back. We had at least one more day of life before us. The sky was growing brighter and the mountains were washed in crimson. Impelled by an impulse I could not resist, I crossed to the window and watched the rising sun. Perhaps, I thought, I would never have a chance to watch it again.

In a moment I caught sight of a party of men as they appeared in my range of vision from the narrow window. Six prisoners came first. Their hands were tied and resignation was written upon their faces. The jailer and some of the guards were conducting them. A squad of soldiers brought up the procession. These men were going to be shot!

I started as I recognized the pale, drawn, but still handsome face of Major Barrez. The rest were also men who had fought with me at Tambo. They were conducted across the courtyard and lined up against the wall.

Spellbound, I watched the grim preparation. The scene sickened me, yet I could not tear myself from the window. One of the prisoners was on his knees praying piteously for them to spare his life. I remembered the fellow. A week ago I had seen him fighting like a fiend incarnate. He was a brave man, not afraid to meet death in battle; but now —the ignominy of the death and the consciousness that he could not escape it, that was what made a coward of him.

The brutal jailer kicked the man who was kneeling, and jerked him to his feet. The poor fellow was very pale, but he threw back his head and stood proudly erect. His momentary weakness was over. The eyes of the prisoners were bandaged. The guards were slow about this. Indeed, it appeared to be their purpose to prolong the thing as much as possible.

The doomed men had taken their last look upon the blue sky and the green hills. I wondered what they were thinking of at that moment. Was it a wife or a mother or a sweetheart whose face appeared before the eyes that would never behold their loved ones again? Perhaps those loved ones were even at that moment praying to God to preserve the men who in another moment would be in eternity.

"For God's sake, hurry!" one of them cried out.

One of the soldiers of the firing squad, a mere boy, turned his face away. "Oh, my God! I can't stand this!" he cried. A stern sergeant ordered him back into line.

The soldiers had raised their rifles. A moment of suspense, and the command to fire was given. The rifles cracked, and the men to whom life had been so sweet but a moment before sank to the ground. They now knew what no man has ever known and lived—what it means to die. The mystery of the great future was no longer a mystery to them. They had solved the problem, but what the answer was none could tell.

Horror-stricken, I tore myself away from the heart-rending yet fascinating sight. Some time—perhaps to-morrow—we were to die thus! We would suffer as these men had suffered! If I had had a revolver I believe I would have blown my brains out and been done with it.

"If we could only get away from here!" I groaned at last.

"There's no use to think of that," Jack said. "It's impossible. There's no way we could possibly escape. No, we are doomed. We might as well have our backs to a wall right now."

"Surely, we are not to stay here and never make an effort to save our lives? Great God! we must escape!"

"We can't, though."

"I don't care if we are discovered. I'd a devil of a sight rather be killed fighting than stand blindfolded with my back to a wall and let a lot of the infernal dagoes riddle me. That's the way I feel about it."

"That's so," agreed Jack; "we can't more than get killed, and we'll get killed anyhow."

"Jack, I believe I've got a plan that'll work," I exclaimed eagerly, after a period of thought.

Then I outlined a plan which had suddenly come to me. The chances of success were slim; but ours was a position in which any risk was to be taken.

"We'll do it!" Jack cried, excitedly, "and this very night, too! To-morrow may be too late."

We spent the rest of the day in perfecting our plan. It was bold and desperate, but still it was simple. We were confident of success. At any rate, we could die in the attempt. That night our maddening anxiety made the minutes pass like hours. The next few hours would decide everything. We were conscious of nothing save that we were going to make a bold stroke for freedom.

At last, when it was about midnight, Jack feigned violent sickness. He groaned and writhed and kicked as if he were suffering the greatest agony. I had to caution him against overdoing the thing. In a moment we heard the tramp of a guard without. Jack increased his groans until they were certain to be heard. The guard stopped and listened. Jack put more fervor in his groans. The guard started off and my heart sank. He changed his mind, though, and returned.

"What the devil's the matter with you fellows in there?" he growled out roughly. "Shut up that blubbering now, or I'll have both of you reported and put in the dungeon."

Jack was alarmed at the threat, but he only groaned the louder.

"Oh, sir," I cried out in the most pathetic tone I could assume, "my comrade is in the most dreadful agony. I am afraid that he has been poisoned."

The guard was evidently considering the matter.

"Oh, sir," I continued, growing more distracted, "won't you please come in and see if you can't help me with him? I don't know what to do."

The guard must have been a kind-hearted man. I heard him insert the key into the lock, and then the bolt fell back. Our plan had succeeded thus far. My heart beat rapidly. The door was slowly pulled open, and the face of the guard appeared. Jack simulated the intensest suffering. I tried to hold him to the floor, while he writhed as if in convulsions. The guard stood hesitating in the doorway.

"Do come and help me," I cried out.

The guard's humanitarian instincts prevailed. He opened the door a little wider and came in. He expected no treachery. My heart smote me, but it was life or death. He came up close beside Jack and knelt down. He must have seen that Jack's suffering was assumed, for he started to his feet with a cry of alarm.

He was too late, though. Before he was fully erect I sprang upon him, and grasped his throat. He wanted to cry out, but could not. I bore him to the floor, and together we quickly had him bound and gagged. He was powerless now.

"We'll get out of this thing now," I said. "Things are going our way altogether."

With deft fingers I went through the guard's pockets. First I found two revolvers, large and formidable, which he had been unable to use. I handed one to Jack; the other I pocketed myself. I found nothing more.

"The devil!" I exclaimed. "What has he done with the keys?"

As I glanced around I caught sight of the bunch of keys hanging from the one in the lock of the door. In a moment I had them in my hands. There were quite a number of them on a large iron ring.

"Inside of ten minutes we will be out of this accursed place," I said exultantly.

Happily for our welfare—and perhaps his own—there was no other guard on duty in the corridor. We closed and locked the door of our cell, leaving the guard in it. I thought of trying to rescue some of the other prisoners, but upon reflection we decided not to attempt it. It would only lessen our own chance of escaping.

With fast beating hearts we hurried along the corridor. The light from the two sooty lamps, one at either end of the corridor, was at best but dim and uncertain. One of the lamps we had already extinguished. The other would be extinguished before the outer door was opened.

We were quickly at the great iron door that led to the court-yard and to freedom. I thought there was a guard just outside. We proceeded with all caution. Our plan was to suddenly fall upon this guard and overpower him before he gave an alarm. It was risky, but we had to take risks.

The third key unlocked the door. We listened intently, but could hear nothing. Jack extinguished the remaining lamp, leaving the corridor in total darkness. Then we pulled the great door open. It was so heavy and moved so hard on its hinges that it took our combined strength to swing it round. One man could not have budged it. As the door opened a gust of cold wind entered, almost taking my breath away. Several big drops of rain plashed against our faces.

A terrible storm was raging. One of the terrific rainstorms which at long intervals sweep over the foot-hill country had come up. A cold, icy rain was pouring down in torrents. It was driven hither and thither by the high wind. There is nothing a Peruvian so detests as a rainstorm.

"It's storming awfully," I commented. "I can't see anything of the guard. He must have deserted his post to seek some convenient shelter, as it were, where he can keep his precious body out of the rain. And for my part, I don't blame him."

The night was dark and we could hardly distinguish objects two feet from our faces. Had the guard been only a short distance away he could not have seen us.

We turned up the collars of our coats and pulled down the brims of our hats so as to protect our faces as much as possible from the fury of the storm. Then we started across the courtyard. By clinging close to the high wall we managed to protect ourselves in a measure from the wind and rain. In a few minutes we were standing in the great gateway. I produced the keys and tried to unlock the gate.

Directly a vivid flash of lightning lit up the prison and all its surroundings. It disclosed our presence to a guard a short distance away.

"Ho, there, who are you?" cried the guard, uncertain as to whether he should shoot.

"Jack, not one of these keys will fit this lock," I announced in the same breath.

"Ho, there," again called out the guard. "Who are you and what are you doing?"

We made no answer to the preemptory hail, but we did move hastily away. The next moment there was a sudden report and a bright spurt of reddish flame cut the darkness.

The rifle was aimed low. The bullet struck a pool of water just at my feet, splashing some of it into my face. We did not return the shot, although I was tempted to do so. We hurried away, keeping close under the shelter of the wall. The wall itself was so smooth that scaling it was out of the question. Jack was shaking from fear. He kept saying to me that we were lost. I wanted to kick him soundly.

The report of the rifle had roused the other guards. In spite of the howling storm, lights were flashing all over the courtyard. Our situation was desperate indeed. For my part, I was determined never to be taken alive.

Directly another brilliant flash of lightning revealed our position anew. A few shots were fired at us, but they all flew wide.

"The dickens!" Jack suddenly exclaimed, as he stumbled over something in the darkness, "what's this?"

"Just as I thought," I cried, after a moment's examination. "It's a ladder. I remember that I saw it when they brought me here. They were fixing the wall."

I set the ladder up against the wall. It was short and lacked several feet of reaching the top of the wall.

"Now, hurry up it," I cried in Jack's ear.

That young man did not wait for a second bidding, but went up the ladder like a cat. In a moment he was standing on the topmost round. He threw out his hands, caught hold of something on the other side of the wall and drew himself up.

"For God's sake, hurry!" I cried, as the guards swarmed closer around me. "Drop on over! I will join you."

Jack clumsily scrambled to the top of the wall. Just as he dropped over, I started up the ladder. Just then one of the guards rushed up and grabbed me by the arm.

"Hold on!" he announced in a tone of confidence. "I've got you now!"

"Damn you, take that!" I cried, drawing my revolver and firing point blank at the man's head. He dropped to the ground like a log.

The shot disclosed my position to the remainder of the guards. They now rushed upon me. But I was active, and I was at the top of the ladder before they were at the foot. I swung myself to the top of the wall and dropped over before they had a chance to fire at me.

"Whew! but that was a close shave!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it was that—but we must get away from here. Will we make for the town or for the forest yonder?"

"To the forest by all means. Maybe we can get up in the mountains and hide there till we can join Paramonte or get out of this country."

We hurried toward the forest. The rain was slackening up, but a cold, cutting wind was still sweeping down from the mountains. We stumbled along over logs and rocks, and often plunged into pools of water, but still we pressed on.

The almost continuous flashes of lightning materially aided us in making progress, but they also disclosed our position to the guards about the prison. They sent many bullets after us, but none of them did any damage.

Finally we arrived on the borders of the forest. Leaving the prison and sleeping town behind us, we plunged boldly into the forest. The darkness here was even more intense than in the open. The trees, however, broke much of the force of the wind.

Our passage through the thick forest was by no means an easy matter. The darkness was intense after the lightning ceased. We could not distinguish anything at a greater distance than a few feet. We often collided with trees and brambly bushes. Soon our heads were aching and our hands and faces were covered with scratches and bruises.

We pushed steadily onward and made fairly good speed. We climbed steadily up the side of the mountain, hoping when daylight came to find a place where we could conceal ourselves till we could find a way to get out of the region.

After two or three hours of this kind of travel, we struck a road, or rather a narrow mule path. It led through the forest, and seemed to cross the mountain. We decided to follow it. We followed it to the summit of a pass, and then started down on the other side. The mountain was merely a sort of a spur of Misti, and was not very high.

Just about daybreak we arrived at a point where the trail we were following crossed a narrow mountain stream. We were by this time many miles from Arequipa. We were well nigh exhausted by our continuous exertions, though, and we decided to rest. We crept off a few rods, until we were out of sight of the trail, and then we stretched ourselves out under the shelter of a large tree. We were soon in deep slumber.

The sun was well up in the heavens when I awoke. My body was sore, my head was aching, and my joints were stiff. Jack was already awake. We were refreshed by our sleep, and started off again. We did not want to follow the trail for fear we would meet some one; so we hurried along the side of the mountain through the forests.

CHAPTER X.

A CAMPAIGN OF IMPUDENCE.

The valley below us was very thinly settled, and we decided to risk going down into it. The road to the south lay through it, and, to tell the truth, we were becoming desperately hungry. If we met any travelers we could doubtless conceal ourselves, or at least act so as to disarm suspicion.

Pretty soon we were down in the valley following along the narrow road, or rather trail. A clear mountain stream ran along it and we slaked our thirst.

For some time we continued down the valley of the clear mountain stream without meeting any one. The valley was lonely and the road little traveled. Directly we came in sight of a great hacienda, though. The valley broadened out here, and was filled with cultivated fields. The hacienda was an extensive one. The main building was of considerable size, and it was surrounded by a number of other buildings.

"Look at that house yonder," I remarked. "I guess it is a sugar plantation or something of the sort. It has a quiet, hospitable look. I'm beastly hungry. Let's go up there and try to get something to eat."

"Won't it be dangerous?"

"I reckon not. They haven't heard of our most wonderful and daring escape up here yet, I don't reckon. I'll make up a yarn to tell them and get 'em to give us something to eat. Anyhow, I'd as lief be shot as starved to death."

"I don't guess there's any danger."

We inspected the house closely from the road before we went up to it. I was about decided that there was no one at home. The whole place looked deserted. We could not see anybody stirring about. In case there was no one at home, I explained to Jack, we would break in and take whatever we wanted. In my mind I had concocted a wonderful tale of misfortune to relate to whoever met us at the house, if, indeed, anyone was there.

I went up boldly to the front door and knocked. Jack followed with less confidence. At first there was no response to my knock. I made my presence known again. This time I heard footfalls rapidly approaching from within.

In a moment the door was opened. A young female servant peered out. When she saw our battered faces and tattered clothing the girl started to slam the door in my face. She evidently took us for tramps.

"Señorita," I said in my most pleasant tone, "can't you assist two poor, unfortunate men? We were traveling last evening just this side of Arequipa when we were set upon by a band of robbers. We made a desperate resistance, but they were ten to one, and they overpowered us. Look at our faces. Don't you see how they assaulted and maltreated us? Haven't you some mercy for two poor, unfortunate travelers? They took everything we had, our mules, our money—everything. We are starving. If you will but relieve our hunger, when we get back to our homes we will see that your noble generosity is rewarded."

The girl was deeply impressed by our tale of woe. Sympathy for our supposed misfortunes was plainly written upon her face.

"Everybody is away from home," she said in some uncertainty, "except the young mistress from Arequipa. She will help you. I will call her."

I started to remonstrate, but the girl had disappeared. I was afraid that her mistress would see through our pretensions. She was gone but a moment, and then returned with a woman, to whom she was relating our tale. The woman glanced at us sympathetically. I remember that her eyes were very beautiful. She was not tall, but she had a sweet, sad face, and I have never seen a more perfect figure. That she was indeed a very beautiful woman could not be doubted.

I made a low bow before the woman. Jack stood there rooted by his surprise and the woman's beauty. I gave him a warning glance, and he too bowed low.

"You have met with a sad misfortune," the woman said in a rich voice, full of sympathy.

"Yes, madam," I replied with a lugubrious sigh, "we have met with the direst misfortune; but since that misfortune has given us the pleasure of looking upon your beautiful face, we are already repaid for all that we have lost."

The woman blushed and smiled prettily. She was evidently not at all displeased with my affected flattery.

"Tell me how it all happened," she said, sympathetically.

I enlarged upon the tale I had told the maid. We were peaceable travelers on our way home from Arequipa, when suddenly a number of fierce, armed men had sprung out and attacked us. We made a most desperate resistance. We killed two of the fellows, but the rest overcame us with their numbers. They took everything we had. Then they beat us shamefully, and when we were insensible cast us away into the forest. The rain roused us from our state of insensibility. With great suffering we made our way to this place.

All this was told in the most glowing terms I could command, and embellished with eloquent gestures and flattering allusions to her own beauty. I could see that we were making a very deep impression upon the woman.

"Poor, unfortunate men!" she exclaimed, looking at us pityingly. "You have suffered much!"

"If you would only supply us with a few bites to eat, we may be able to get to our home—that is, if everybody on the way is as generous as you will be."

"You noble man," the woman exclaimed warmly. "You are as modest as you are brave. After all that you have suffered you ask only for a bite to eat. You shall be treated as you deserve."

Her last words were a little ambiguous. I had a guilty conscience, and I started back a step or two. I feared she meant that we would be treated as the impostors we really were. However, the next words put me at ease.

"You shall have the very best that the house affords," she continued. "Enter and be welcome! Dinner will be served in a few minutes. Let me see, your name is——"

"Bellarez," I returned hastily, "and this is my friend Señor Jances," turning to Jack.

Jack had by this time caught some of my infection. He made a low bow, which was imitated in a lesser edition by the woman.

"Enter, señors," she continued. "The rest of the household are at Señor Bascanto's on a visit. They will not be back till evening. I had a headache and did not care to go with them. I am merely on a visit here myself. It is my father's hacienda. I live at Arequipa. But a Pardo would never have turned away such noble men as you are empty handed."

This warm welcome quite disconcerted me for a while.

"You are too good," I managed to stammer out.

She led the way into the house. We followed as in a dream. The woman never suspected that we had not told her the truth. She led the way to the drawing-room. The room was finely furnished. We felt quite out of place with our torn clothes and dirty appearance. Jack was speechless with wonder, but I managed to make a few coherent remarks.

"Ah, my unfortunate friends," the little woman said, after some disconnected talk, "the robbers took all your money, did they not?"

"They took everything we had," I replied, lugubriously.

"You will need money for the rest of your journey."

"You know they say that necessity is the mother of invention. We will have to get along without it."

"No, indeed, you will not," she returned, impulsively. "It shall never be said that a Pardo turned away an unfortunate man empty handed."

"Oh, madam, we——"

Bestowing a sweet smile upon me, the little woman swept out of the room. Jack looked at me dubiously. The thing had gone much further than I had ever anticipated. We had come to get a bite of something to eat, and here we were treated as guests.

In a minute the woman returned. She carried in her hand a small purse well filled with gold.

"Take this," she said, proffering the purse to me. "It will help you on your journey."

"Oh, madam," I cried, as if overcome by her generosity, "but I cannot take your gold. I——"

I had no notion of not taking it, though.

"I understand your feelings," said the woman, "but you must take it. You can't get along without money."

"Oh, how can we ever repay all of your kindness?" I cried, taking the gold.

"By not mentioning them."

"You are an angel sent down from heaven."

"You will find me a very earthly angel," she said with a musical laugh.

We conversed upon various topics for considerable time. The woman seemed much interested in me. This was flattering to me. After some time dinner was announced, and we passed into the dining room. With the best grace I could command I offered the lady my arm. She accepted it with a smile that was heavenly and that set my heart throbbing strangely.

Jack followed us like a man in a dream. He was not at all sure that he was not dreaming. I have rarely eaten of a more delicious repast than the one set before us now. The dining room would have done honor to a palace. On the walls were portraits of many beautiful women and gay cavaliers, ancestors, no doubt, of our beautiful hostess.

One of the windows of the dining room opened upon the road over which we had just passed. I glanced out through the window, wondering what the lady would think if she knew whom she was entertaining. I caught sight of a party of soldiers approaching along the road. They say that guilt makes cowards of us all. To my mind there could be but one meaning attached to the approach of the soldiers. They were following us and had found out where we were. A spasm of fright passed over me. I let fall a glass of wine, which spilled over the table, leaving a red stain. I sprang to my feet in alarm. My chair was overthrown, and it fell to the floor with a great clatter. Our charming hostess looked up at me in utter astonishment.

"Why Señor Bellarez," she exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

We were in a bad hole. I am usually cool in danger, but the experiences of the night before had shattered my nerves. I seemed to have lost all power of reasoning. It never occurred to me that the soldiers might not be after us; or that they might not know of our presence at the hacienda. I thought that everything was known to them. Jack had seen them and was trembling. Our hostess had also risen.

"What is it?" she asked again.

"Do you see those soldiers yonder?"

She saw them. Her eyes glittered and I saw that she had suspicioned the truth.

"We must not be seen by those soldiers," I said as calmly as I could. "Do you understand?"

"Why not? You can put them in pursuit of the robbers who attacked you." She laughed softly.

I saw that the only way out of the scrape was to tell her the truth. She might sympathize with us then and help us. If she did not, I had my revolver in my pocket. That would quiet her till the danger was past.

"We have been deceiving you," I said hurriedly. "We were engaged in a rebellion and were taken prisoners. They took us to Santa Rossa prison. We were to have been shot, but we escaped last night. We merely came here to get something to eat. Don't betray us to those soldiers."

The woman was in doubt.

"We must be going," I said. "You will not tell them that we have been here?"

"No, I will not betray you. Do you want me to hide you in the house somewhere?"

It was my turn to hesitate.

"No," I decided, "you mustn't do that. If you hid us and we were discovered it might go hard with you. We don't want to get you in any trouble."

"I am willing to do anything to help you, even if you did deceive me so shamefully," she said, with a look of reproach in her beautiful eyes.

"You can't do much. If the soldiers come here, though, you must not let them know that we have been here."

"I will not."

"Can we get through the canefield to the forest yonder?"

"Yes, that is the best way for you to escape. The cane is so tall that you will escape observation."

"We will have to hurry, madam."

"Perhaps the soldiers won't come here. If they do I can hide you where they can't find you. There is no need for you to go."

"We mustn't risk involving you any more than can be helped. We will get away all right."

The soldiers were approaching from the north. We went out at a side door facing the south, so that we would not be seen by them. They were still a considerable distance off. Jack passed out ahead of me. I was left alone in the hall with the little woman.

She was close beside me, looking up into my face with a shy, confiding smile. She was a little creature and hardly stood to my shoulder. An irresistible temptation suddenly took hold of me. I passed my arm about her waist and drew her to me. She did not resist and for a moment her little head was resting upon my shoulder. With a guilty blush she turned her sad, childish face, with its sparkling eyes and bewitching mouth, up to mine. I bent down and impressed a kiss upon her red lips. She blushed crimson at this. I thought she was more beautiful than ever. For a moment she lay snug and confiding in my arms. Then with a little sob, she broke away and darted out of the hall. I stood there like a clumsy fool.

However, an impatient cry from Jack on the outside quickly recalled our position, and I darted out of the house. Jack was waiting impatiently.

Together we hurried past the outhouses to the great canefield. I looked back and saw the little woman standing at the window. She smiled at us, and we disappeared in among the tall stalks of cane. I never expected to see her again.

Our progress was slow. The cane was thick and it retarded our movements. The sharp blades cut like knives. We made our way through in some way, though. We followed along through the forest for several hours. We saw nothing more of the soldiers, and concluded that they were off the trail.

Just before nightfall we came upon a little hut in the midst of the forest. The hut had only one room, but plenty of cracks. We circled round it, and, as we saw no sign of human habitation, we decided to explore the place. There was nobody in the hut, and there was nothing to indicate that it had been inhabited for years. We decided to spend the night in here.

The little woman had supplied us with some things to eat, and now we sat down at one side and began devouring the food. We were engaged thus when suddenly a dark shadow clouded the doorway. Glancing up we saw a man standing upon the threshold. He was regarding us in surprise. My first thought was that he was a soldier who had traced us to this place. With a cry of alarm, I drew my revolver and covered him with it. The man did not seem the least frightened as he glanced down the shining barrel of the revolver. He merely smiled confidently.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"Who the devil are you?" he blurted out in return.

"And who the devil are you?" I retorted.

"I am Juan Riablo."

"What are you doing here?"

"I own this place. I have a right to come to it when I please. What are you doing here?"

"We were traveling through the forest when we came across this hut. It was deserted. We thought we would spend the night in it instead of in the forest."

"Who are you?"

"We are hunters!"

"Hunters be damned! I know who you are. You're the prisoners who escaped from Santa Rossa last night."

"Your information won't do you any good. If that's what we are we'll take pains to see that you don't have a chance to betray us. What are you?"

"You don't know Juan Riablo?" the fellow cried in amazement. "That's strange. I'm the worst criminal in Peru. I'm a murderer, a thief, a pickpocket, and the Lord only knows what else."

"Quite an accomplished gentleman!"

"Yes, but this country is getting too hot for me now. I've got to clear out."

"Do you know the country around here?"

"Every foot of it."

"We don't. What do you say to joining us and acting as a guide? I'm afraid if you refuse, we'll have to blow your brains out."

"I'll go with you. We're all in the same box."

And thus Juan Riablo became one of us.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNLUCKY ENCOUNTER.

We found Riablo in truth a most accomplished scoundrel. We could hardly suggest anything that he had not tried at some point in his career. He had been a sailor, a gold hunter, a soldier—everything; but most of all a villain. According to his own confession, I think he must have committed every crime that has a name. His point of pride was the number and variety of his crimes.

Notwithstanding his villainy, he was an entertaining sort of a fellow. Put him in a drawing room and he would have had the appearance of a gentleman. I would never have taken him for a desperate criminal. He could make a fire at night with no blaze to reveal our whereabouts to the passer-by. He was a good cook and an excellent forager. We were never in want of something to eat. If we desired domestic fowl, Riablo would procure it for us from he alone knew where. If we desired fruit, all that was required was a word to Riablo and our wants would be filled.

He was always in a good humor, laughing and joking. Yet beneath this veneer of carelessness, there was an undercurrent of devilish ferocity. He was a dangerous man to rouse to anger. His steely, colorless eyes had an unsteady glitter that carried with it instinctive mistrust.

Riablo would go into the towns and would bring us news of the outside world. We learned that the rebellion was gaining ground steadily all over the south. Outside of Arequipa and one or two other cities the government exercised little authority. The rebels were somewhere further up in the mountains. It was our purpose to join them. We heard various rumors, but we could get no exact information as to the position of Paramonte's army. So we were going it blind, to some extent.

Nearly a week had passed since that eventful night when Jack and I made our escape from Santa Rossa prison. Under Riablo's guidance we avoided all the much traveled highways. He knew the country thoroughly. We did not experience any great hardships, but had we been alone, we would have been captured long before.

We were making our way along the slope of a mountain. Down in the valley below, a little thread of silver marked the winding course of one of the lesser tributaries of the Tambo. About a mile ahead of us and nestled close down in the valley was a pretty little village.

"I believe I'll go down there and see if the rebels are anywhere in this neighborhood," said Riablo, jerking his thumb toward the village.

"Look here," I exclaimed, "Riablo, what's to prevent Jack and me going down with you?"

Riablo looked at me doubtfully.

"I suppose it will be all right," he said presently, "if you fellows care to risk it. You must be careful, though."

Thus it was decided.

We started down to the village. At the base of the mountain we struck the trail. We did not meet anybody until we were in the village. Quite a number of people were on the streets. They stared at us rather curiously, but did not offer to interfere. Riablo was perfectly at home in the crowd, but I was afraid each moment that we would be recognized the next. Jack was still more afraid. I was alarmed lest his evident agitation should betray us. After awhile, however, some of Jack's fear wore off.

To my surprise and alarm, I saw half a dozen Peruvian soldiers lounging about in uniform. We could see their dirty tents a little distance away from the village. I could not imagine what soldiers could be doing in this little mountain town.

We passed close by them, but the soldiers paid no attention to us whatever. I was immensely relieved. We sauntered along the street leisurely, and near the further end of the village we entered a low wine shop. Going up to the bar, Riablo called for drinks. I could hardly drink the poisonous stuff that was given us, but I managed to gulp it down somehow. After drinking, we took our seats at a little table.

The wine shop was a low, uncleanly den of vice. There was quite a crowd in it. Everybody was smoking and drinking. The clouds of smoke stifled me and I could hardly see.

"It's an infernal shame," a half-drunken wretch was declaring, "that these soldiers have come here."

"That's what it is," agreed the others.

"What are they up here for?" somebody asked.

"I reckon they've heard at Arequipa that the people around here favor the rebels," the first speaker explained. "And now they've gone and sent their infernal old troops up here to preserve order, they say. Order be damned! Who wants order? They'll be making us pay their blasted old salt tax and everything else. It's an infernal shame. If I had my way about it, why, why, I'd have every damned one of the soldiers hung!"

After delivering this eloquent address the man glanced at his hearers in that patronizing way that a man looks down upon those infinitely beneath us.

"I wish you had your way," said a third speaker, "or that the rebels would come down and send 'em to hell—where they belong."

"Wonder where they are."

"Can't tell."

"I know," put in a new speaker, lumbering up from the bar. He was dusty and had been traveling.

I listened eagerly. Here was a man who knew the whereabouts of the rebels.

"Where are they?" was asked in chorus.

"They were at Barrilla yesterday—thousands of them!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned some facetious one.

"Why, Barrilla's only fifteen miles away!" exclaimed the eloquent man.

"I was there yesterday, and the rebels were there then."

"D'ye reckon they're comin' this way?"

"I heard that they were."

"Fellow citizens," cried out the eloquent man, "maybe the rebels are coming here now. We'll receive them. We'll receive them with open arms!

Lord! what will these soldiers do if they do come?"

"Hurrah for the rebels!" some one cried.

The rest joined in the cry. The little wine shop fairly shook with the sound.

"That's right," commented the eloquent man, rubbing his hands benignly. "Let's all drink to the rebels."

The crowd lined up to the bar. To avoid suspicion we joined them. Everybody was drinking and cheering the rebels and cursing the soldiers and the government.

"You see," Riablo whispered to me. "We'll join Paramonte yet. If he's at Barrilla or coming this way, we'll join him to-morrow. We won't stay here much longer."

Just then half a dozen soldiers streamed in through the door. Most of them were half drunk. The men who had been so boisterous but a moment before were silent now. All looked frightened. I noticed several reaching for knives or revolvers. I thought the soldiers had come to break up the crowd; a general fight was imminent.

A sergeant was the only officer in the squad. He was about the drunkest of them all.

"What is the meaning of this maudlin blasphemy?" he asked, trying to straighten himself up and appear with becoming dignity.

"You are all rebels. I put you all under arrest."

He tried to draw the short sword that was at his side, but he was unable to get it half out of the scabbard. The effort involved was too much for his doubtful equilibrium. He staggered forward and would have fallen to the floor had not a rickety old table broken his fall. He lay there embracing the table and panting out the most undignified supplications. With a broad grin the eloquent man caught up a board and spanked him sharply.

The crowd roared, but the sergeant looked aggrieved. He blinked his eyes solemnly and tried to recover his lost dignity. He only made himself the more ludicrous.

"Now, I don't think that was kind of you," he said gravely. "You must respect me. I am a man of authority. You are all under arrest. Understand? You're all under arrest!"

The crowd had lost their fear now, and they only roared louder than ever.

"Come, *sargentito mio,*" said the eloquent man, with a grin, "and drink with us. Then you can arrest us all."

The sergeant blinked his eyes and considered the matter very gravely.

"Now that's kind of you," he said. "You're a gentleman—and a soldier."

With the eloquent man's aid the dignified sergeant recovered his balance, and lumbered unsteadily up to the bar. He took a drink at the expense of the eloquent man, and so did the soldiers.

"You're all good fellows!" solemnly avowed the sergeant, steadying himself on the bar.

"You're right, *sargento.* We always like good soldiers like you," the eloquent man said. "Like to kill them," he added by way of explanation.

The sergeant did not know whether to take this last as a compliment or an insult. He considered it solemnly.

"You're all right, *sargento,*" said Riablo, grinning.

Jack was standing next to the sergeant, and Riablo was next to him. The sergeant thought it was Jack who had spoken. He turned to him with sympathetic looks. I thought Jack was going to drop right there.

"You're my friend," the sergeant said, laying his hand upon Jack's shoulder. "What's your name?"

"I surrender," Jack cried out in terror. "I'm Jack Whitman!"

"You fool!" I gasped, taking Jack by the arm. He had had no better judgment than to give the sergeant his real name. Doubtless the sergeant had heard of our escape. Riablo looked as though he wanted to kill Jack right there.

"Whitman," he said in a drunken mutter. "Oh, I know you!"

The sergeant pressed his hand to his forehead, as if trying to recall something. The intoxication seemed to pass from him.

"You're one of the fellows that escaped from Santa Rossa prison," he said rapidly, his hand closing upon Jack's shoulder. "Your game's up! You are my prisoner! Here," to the soldiers with him, "arrest those two fellows," pointing to Riablo and me.

The soldiers prepared to carry out the order. The other men were slinking away. Evidently they did not care to be implicated in the matter. Only half a dozen of the worst remained. I thought we could count on their being with us in a fight. The sergeant still held Jack.

"Let him go—the infernal fool," whispered Riablo in my ear. "We can get away by ourselves."

"Give him one more trial," I said. "Just one more."

"He is a fool!"

It was necessary to act quickly if we meant to do anything. We had our pistols, but if we used them the noise would attract attention. We wished to avoid that as much as possible. I caught the back of a chair and lifted it in my hands. Everybody, even the soldiers, sprang out of reach. They knew that we were desperate and would hesitate at nothing. The sergeant tried to get away without relinquishing his hold upon Jack. He failed, and in a moment I brought the heavy chair crashing down upon his head. He dropped to the floor like a log.

I grasped one of Jack's arms and Riablo took the other. We darted right through the crowd of astonished soldiers and loungers. The latter were inclined to favor us, and made way for us. One or two of them also managed to accidentally get in the way of the soldiers. Fortunately the soldiers were not armed. Two of them sprang in front of us and tried to stop us. I knocked one down and Riablo stabbed the other.

The others made way for us. In a moment we were out in the street. We hurried along the street dragging Jack along with us. We were soon out of the village. Some of the soldiers started after us, but as they were unarmed, and their comrades were on the other side of the town, they were not over-anxious to come up with us. We soon distanced them and got into the shelter of the forest along the base of the mountain. The soldiers then gave up the chase and returned to the town.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

For several hours we made our way along the side of the mountain. Riablo was fuming and raging all the time. Jack was gloomy and downcast, brooding over the unfortunate recognition he had brought upon us. For my part, I was afraid that we would be recaptured. I was sure that the soldiers would not give up the search so readily.

But as nothing appeared to alarm us, I became less apprehensive. Night was drawing on. The reddening sun was close upon the western horizon. For some time we had been looking about for a suitable place to spend the night.

We were well up on the mountain side. As we skirted about a projected spur, the panorama of the beautiful valley of the Tambo stretched out for miles before us. At first we did not catch the details of the scene; we were dazzled by the brilliant whole. But as the scene grew more familiar the eye took in more of the detail of the magnificent picture. I caught a glimpse of white far down the valley, and a little wisp or two of smoke.

"Look yonder, Riablo," I said, pointing in the direction of the smoke, "what do you make of that?"

Riablo looked steadily in the direction I had indicated. He shaded his eyes to see better. His brow contracted; I could see that he was puzzled.

"It looks like tents and a campfire or two," he muttered. "*Dios,* it must be that the rebels have come up from Barrilla. They're camped there."

"Of course that's it," I returned, wondering that I had not thought of that explanation before.

"We can get down there this evening," Jack suggested.

"No use to hurry," said Riablo, philosophically. "It's five or six miles down there, and we haven't got more than fifteen minutes of daylight left. It's not healthy to go fooling around a rebel camp after dark. Like as not, if we go down there to-night one of their infernal sentinels will blow our heads off. We'd better wait till to-morrow."

"You're right," I acquiesced. "But where are we going to stay to-night—out here in the woods?"

"I don't know," returned Riablo doubtfully. "I don't like that idea. I've got a devil of a cold now. See that old house down yonder? It's deserted, isn't it?"

"It has that appearance."

"If it's deserted we can go down there and sleep. We'll go down and see about it, anyhow."

We started down the mountain in the direction of the house that Riablo had noticed. We made rapid progress and soon we were drawing near the house. It certainly did have all the appearance of being deserted. The doors were down, the windows were smashed out, and most of the roof was gone. It did not look as if it would afford much protection from the weather. The door posts were rotting away and the floors of the porches were covered with moss. The house had not been occupied for years.

However, even its partial shelter would be better than the exposure of the open forest. The road from the village we had just left so precipitately led along in front of the house. We made our way through the tall weeds up to it. We passed through the open doorway into the house. Dust lay thick on the floors. The ceilings were buried in cobwebs. The stairway was narrow and ancient, but its supports had almost rotted away. Upstairs there were only two large rooms and the hall. In one of the rooms the roof had fallen. The debris had so choked up the room that we could hardly get into it. The other room was but little better. Much of the ceiling had fallen, leaving the bare rafters exposed.

The place was safe enough and we decided to spend the night here. Riablo had some provisions that he had brought in his pockets and we made a scanty meal off of them. Then we sat and told most wonderful yarns till we were all tired and sleepy. We stretched ourselves on the bare floor of one of the lower rooms. Soon we were fast asleep.

Our troubles did not much disturb our slumbers—mine at any rate. I slept soundly through the night. The sun was shining in upon my face when at last I awoke. Jack and Riablo were still sleeping. I rose clumsily to my feet and yawned mightily. Then I started suddenly as I heard some one passing along the road which ran in front of the house. This alarmed me. From the sound I judged that there were quite a number of them. Thoughtlessly I hurried to the front door to see who it was. My brain must not have been clear yet, or

I would never have exposed myself openly in the doorway as I did.

A squad of Peruvian soldiers were passing along the road. They came from the village where we had had our encounter of the day before. I was too much stupefied to move. In a moment some one of them caught sight of me. He gave a shout of triumph.

"Here they are!" he cried out. "Look!"

I was paralyzed with fright. I could not move. I heard an officer order them to surround the house so that we could not get away. Still I could only stand there and stare blankly. The soldiers quickly spread about the house. There were about twenty of them. They seemed to want to take us alive if possible.

At last I recovered from my astonishment sufficently to go back and wake Riablo and Jack. Riablo was just waking when I re-entered the room.

"What the devil is the matter now?" he asked as he rubbed his heavy eyes. "What is this noise?"

"Soldiers!" I managed to gasp out. "They're surrounding the place."

Riablo sprang to his feet. His face was very white. He glanced through the window and caught a glimpse of two or three uniformed figures struggling through the weeds. Riablo was a man of quick action. No danger was allowed to cloud his mind for an instant. He grasped me by the arm and dragged me out of the room.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Make a rush for the woods back yonder, before they get us surrounded. Hurry up!"

"You aren't going to leave Jack here, I hope!"

"Why not? The blithering fool! If he goes with us we'll all be captured sure!"

"You can go if you want to, but I'll be hanged if I'm going away and leave Jack here without trying to help him. I'm going to stay with him."

"Then, damn you, stay! I don't care! Stay with the fool and be a fool like him!"

"All right, but if you get away, try and send the rebels up here to help us, or to get us away if we are captured."

Riablo darted out through the rear doorway alone. The forest was not far away. He made straight for it, running with all his might. The soldiers quickly caught sight of him. Half a dozen of them started after him. He out-distanced them easily and they fired after him. At one shot I saw Riablo clap his hand to his shoulder, as if a bullet had grazed him; but his speed did not decrease in the least. A moment later he was lost from sight in the woods.

Jack had been wakened by the shots and the yells. Now he came staggering out into the hall with heavy eyes and a look of alarm on his face. He had not comprehended matters yet.

"What's the matter?" he asked, seeing me.

"Get your revolver out and get ready to fight," I yelled at him. "We're surrounded by soldiers. We'll have to make some sort of a resistance. We can't get away. Better be killed fighting, though, than be shot as traitors. If we can hold them off for two or three hours, maybe Riablo will come back with some of the rebels to help us."

"I'll fight," said Jack determinedly.

We had only our revolvers, but we had plenty of ammunition for them, having purchased a supply several days before.

The soldiers would doubtless have been in the house before this had not their attention been drawn to Riablo. We had both drawn our revolvers. We had the advantage of position, and if Jack only did not turn craven we could put up a pretty strong fight. We were entirely surrounded now. It would have been sheer suicide to have left the house.

Encouraged by the fact that we were making no resistance, the soldiers were rapidly closing in. In a moment a big fellow sprang out of the weeds into the front doorway. He was the sergeant whom I had hit over the head with a chair the day before. He had a rifle, but expected no resistance.

"Here are the other two!" he called to his comrades.

I pointed my revolver at him, and almost before he noticed the action, I pulled the trigger. There was a sharp crack and a little blue wisp of smoke curled about the muzzle of the weapon. The sergeant clapped his hand to his shoulder and spun round like a top. He uttered a great howl of pain and scrambled out of sight.

Almost at the same time a couple of soldiers appeared at the rear. Jack behaved better than I had anticipated. He shot one of the fellows, and the other ran away.

The soldiers now saw that we were desperate; and they approached with greater caution. A bullet from the weeds whizzed past me and buried itself in the wall. I sprang back into a little recess where I would be out of reach of the bullets.

Directly half a dozen of them reached the porch from the outside. Suddenly they made a rush for the doorway. I began pumping lead into them. I hugged pretty close to the recess at the same time. They fired back at me, and one or two of their bullets whistled uncomfortably near my head, but I was untouched.

I fired all five of the shots that remained in my revolver, but I don't think more than one or two of them did any damage. The soldiers, however, did not like it, and quickly got out of range. Their leader, a young lieutenant, lay prone across the doorsill. His fall had doubtless caused the sudden panic.

I jerked down the cylinder of my revolver and crammed six fresh cartridges into it. Some of the soldiers now appeared in the rear again. They kept so closely under cover though that Jack had no chance to get an effective shot at them. I could see some of them in front also, but they seemed to be trying more to distract attention than to do anything else.

Directly I heard somebody in the room to the left of the hall. I saw then what they were trying to do. They would have the advantage in attacking from that direction. I could not see them from where I was. I quickly sprang out from the recess. Two or three shots were fired, but your Peruvian is generally a bad shot, and I was not hit. I sprang to the door of the room, revolver in hand.

There were three men in the room. Another was climbing through the window. I fired at them, but my aim was wild and I missed. One of the fellows in turn discharged his rifle at me. He was but a few feet off, and could hardly have missed. There was a tingling pain in my side just under my left arm; and I could feel the warm blood trickling down my side. It was a mere scratch, but had the bullet passed two inches nearer it would have gone through my heart.

I sprang back from the doorway into a little corner of the hall. Here I was protected from those in the room and those in front, but I was still exposed to the fire through the door and a window of the room on the right. In a moment I had a forcible reminder of this. A bullet whistled past my ear and buried itself in the woodwork. Directly another bullet lopped a piece from the brim of my hat.

It was impossible to remain there. The men in the room were preparing to rush upon me, and I was not in a position where I could hold them off. More men were hurrying up the porch, but I could not get a shot at them. The men Jack was facing had been reinforced, and they, too, were preparing for a rush.

The hall was filled with acrid powder smoke. I glanced about for some means of escape, but I could see nothing. At last the stairway caught my eye. It was narrow and two men at the top of it, well protected and well armed, ought to be able to hold it against an army. There was no hope of escaping by any other means. The soldiers were closing upon us from every direction. They were rather afraid of our weapons now, but it was only a question of a short time until we must be killed or captured.

"I can't hold out here much longer!" Jack called.

I decided upon a plan.

"Then come here."

Jack sprang up from where he was crouching, and made a dash for my position. Of course, he had to expose himself in doing this. Several shots were fired at him, but without effect. Seeing that there was no longer anyone to resist them, the men in the rear rushed up to the house. Those in front grew bolder and followed their example. The men in the room started for the hall, but a couple of shots checked them. In a minute, however, the hall was swarming with soldiers. The smoke hung heavy, though, and they could hardly see us.

We dashed straight up the narrow stairway. The soldiers did not see us till we were near the top. One of them, thinking we had means of escape, fired at us, but he did no damage. Before another shot could be fired we were on the landing.

We threw ourselves at full length so as to protect ourselves as much as possible from the shots of those below. A dozen soldiers started up the stairway after us. The smell of powder and their eagerness in the chase banished their caution. The stairway was narrow and everybody tried to be foremost. The stairway was quickly jammed.

Jack and I fired simultaneously into this crowd. One man dropped limp on the stairway. His companions did not heed his fall. They swarmed over his body, and pushed and jammed each other, every one determined to reach the landing first.

The stairway was old and rotten, and it was unaccustomed to such a weight. It creaked alarmingly under the burden. Jack and I kept firing, but without any perceptible effect.

The floor of the upper hall projected over the lower portion of the stairway. In the upper hall was a very heavy, solid old cabinet that had been left by the last inhabitants of the house. As I saw it a new idea flashed across my brain.

"Keep your revolver going for awhile," I whispered to Jack, "and I'll show you something."

Jack nodded that he understood. I crawled along till I was out of range of those in the hall below. Then I sprang to my feet and hurried up to where the cabinet stood. It was so heavy that I could barely lift one side of it. However, the heavier it was the better it suited my purpose.

The balustrade around the opening for the stairway was old and rotten. A few sharp kicks sent a considerable section of it crashing down upon the heads of the soldiers. Jack was still firing away with his revolver.

I peered over the edge, cautiously, lest I should be observed. The main body of the soldiers was jammed directly below me. The time had come. I dragged the old cabinet to the edge. It took all my strength to move it. Then I turned it up, and with an effort pushed it over. The heavy cabinet fell directly upon the heads of the soldiers below.

The stairway was already groaning beneath its burden. This sudden addition completed the work. There was a great crashing and smashing of wood, mingled with cries of pain and the shouts and curses of the soldiers. The rotten old stairway gave way, precipitating soldiers and all into the hall below.

There were screams and groans and cries such as I had rarely heard before. A great cloud of dust obscured everything. When it lifted, those who were able were scrambling out of the wreckage. They were sorry looking fellows, with their faces bruised and their uniforms soiled and torn. Several had arms or legs broken. The fight was effectually taken out of these.

CHAPTER XIII.

RECAPTURED AND RELEASED.

The part of the stairway which still remained intact was some seven or eight feet above the floor. One or two reckless fellows tried to scramble up to where we were, but we quickly drove them back with our revolvers. The soldiers in the hall were at our mercy now, and when we began firing they quickly got out. Our position had become more tenable.

We had a short breathing spell. The soldiers had withdrawn from the hall, but we could still hear them jabbering away on the outside. Doubtless they were concocting some new plan for our capture.

I left Jack to guard the head of the stairway while I went to reconnoiter. I knew that the windows would be watched, and so I kept away from them as much as possible. The room to the left was full of the debris of the fallen roof, but the one to the right was more open. I feared that the soldiers would get into this room and attack us through it.

I hurried into the room. I was none too soon. The soldiers also had acted quickly. They had found an old ladder somewhere about, and two or three of them were climbing up it to the window. The foremost was just crawling in when I caught sight of him.

They had hoped to surprise us, but they had failed. The man was not prepared to fight, and when he saw me he tried to slide back down the ladder. Before he could get out of sight I had shot him. He gave a cry and fell backwards. I sprang across the room to the window. Two or three fellows were scurrying away to some shelter. I fired at one of them, but without effect. I peered out in my excitement, but a bullet crashed into the woodwork not two inches from my head, and I quickly got back under cover. I did not expose myself again.

I remained there with my revolver cocked, expecting another attack, but none came. The soldiers had evidently decided that it would not be wise to attack us openly again. Then, too, I had a suspicion that their fighting strength had been considerably diminished by our bullets. I peeped out once and I saw soldiers all about. They had not given up yet. I felt that their silence had some deep meaning.

After a few minutes' impatient waiting I began to hear a muffled, crackling noise below me. Little blue wisps of smoke curled up about the windows. It was not powder smoke, either. The room became hot and oppressive. There was no mistaking the meaning of this. They had set the house afire!

It may seem strange, but I had never once thought of this. I was dumb for a moment. They were going to burn us out. Jack called to me that the hall was afire. I hurried back to the hall. The smoke was thicker there. It half stifled me, and distorted the vision. Down in the lower hall great, glowing tongues of flame were leaping about.

The woodwork of the house was light and it burned like tinder. Down stairs all the house to the right of the hall was already a raging mass of flames. I called Jack to my side. He was thoroughly frightened. Our escape through the hall was cut off by the flames. The heat was terrific. The flames leaped along with alarming rapidity. I never saw a fire gain headway so rapidly.

We darted into the room I had just left and made toward the window. The floor beneath our feet was hot and smoking. Tar was oozing up from the planks. Already little tongues of flame were creeping over the floor. I knew that the fire was raging just beneath our feet. The room was like an oven.

A moment later there was a great roar, a crackling and spitting of flame, and a great wall of fire seemed to burst through the floor in front of us. We halted in terror. The flame was between us and the window!

For a time we stood there completely dazed. I could not move. Jack was clinging to my arm and trembling in every limb. The rapidity with which the fire spread was appalling. In a moment it seemed there were flames all around us. There was no time to think. Catching Jack by the arm and dragging him along, I made straight for the door. The flames interposed, but we held our breath, ducked our heads and darted right through it. The burning planks beneath our feet cracked and broke beneath our weight. I expected to plunge into that seething caldron of flame beneath our feet. But with a mighty effort we recovered ourselves and got into the hall.

Our hair was singed, our faces blistered, and our clothing on fire in a dozen places. I thought we must surely succumb to the terrific heat. The cartridges in the pocket of my coat began to go off of their own accord. I jerked off the coat and tossed it into the flames. The metal of the revolver was hot and it burned my hands. I threw it away, too.

The hall was also on fire, but not to such an extent as the room we had left. We darted right through the flame into the ruined room. The fire had not yet reached this room and we had a breathing spell. However, the room below was in flames, and the floor was hot. We must not delay. There was an open window at the further end of the room. The other windows were all jammed with wreckage.

The heaps of wreckage and debris we had previously thought impassable were climbed over with ease. We tore our hands and barked our shins, but still we pushed on. The dreadful fire fiend was behind us, and it impelled us to superhuman exertions. The heat was increasing. The floor was bulging and smoking. In a very few minutes this room too would be in flames. At last we reached the window. Jack crawled through, and I started after him. Just as I was lowering myself the great crash came. The floor, undermined by the fire and overloaded by the debris, had fallen. A moment later, with a great roar, the flames filled the room. We had escaped none too soon. A moment's delay and it would have been forever too late. I dropped to the ground and joined Jack.

A great shout went up from the soldiers when they caught sight of us. A half dozen of them started toward us. We had no weapons, for Jack had also thrown away his revolver. I tried to run, but my limbs were raw and sore, and I could hardly move. Everything seemed to swim before my eyes, but still I staggered on. I had not gone a hundred feet, though, before I was surrounded by soldiers. I was desperate. I struck one of the men, but my hands were raw, and I hurt myself worse than I hurt the man. The next moment three or four burly fellows sprang upon me, and bore me to the ground. In a jiffy my hands and feet were tied, and I could struggle no longer. Jack was also captured.

The soldiers, and Jack and I with them, immediately started back toward the village. They had accomplished their misson; they had captured the two fugitives. Doubtless they had heard that the rebels were in this vicinity and did not care to risk a battle with them. We had inflicted considerable damage, but not as much as I had thought. Two of them had been killed, and four or five more wounded, most of them only slightly.

We arrived in the village just about noon. For us, the march had been a long and gloomy one. Just when we had thought ourselves safe, when we expected to rejoin the rebels in a few hours, we had been recaptured. Jack and I were both suffering considerably from our burns and bruises, but we managed to keep on our feet until we reached the village.

Including those with us, I estimated that there were seventy-five or eighty men in the camp there. We were separated, Jack being placed in one tent and I in another. We were not bound, but guards were placed about both tents to watch us. We were given to understand that if we made any attempt to escape our brains would promptly be blown out.

The flap of my tent prison was left open, and I had a view of the camp and the trail over which we had just come. The guards were lounging about, chatting together, smoking cigarettes and ever and anon glancing at me.

An hour passed without anything happening. The soldiers were laughing and joking like boys, never suspecting any danger. The trail entered the forest a hundred yards off, and that was as far as we had any view of it. Suddenly there came the quick rattle of rifles, and a perfect swarm of men came rushing out of the forest where the trail entered it. I was as much surprised as anybody at their appearance. But a moment before the woods had shown no sign of life.

It was an attack in broad daylight, but nevertheless the surprise was complete. The government troops had never dreamed of being attacked in this manner. Instantly all was confusion. Officers ran wildly to and fro, brandishing their swords and bawling out incoherent orders. The men rushed toward where their arms had been stacked. Some few of them fled. Before those who remained were in line the rebels were in the camp.

As the surprise was complete, so was the rout quick and complete. The rebels swept through the camp, carrying everything before them. The sharp rattle of the rifles was mingled with the clash of steel when the two forces came together. A short conflict was waged hand to hand. The rebels were confident, and they outnumbered the government troops many times. The latter only made a show of resistance. They stood up before the onslaught for a minute, and then they turned and fled.

Soon they were in abject flight. The rebels pursued close after them. The irregular cracking of the rifles grew less distinct and less frequent, as the fugitives scattered and got further away. Only the dead and wounded on the field remained to tell the tale of the battle. Those who had escaped had taken to the mountains and the rebels were pursuing them.

My tent prison was left unguarded from the first surprise, and the government troops seemed to have forgotten all about their prisoners. At any rate, we were not disturbed. The first man I met upon issuing from the tent was Señor Paramonte, whom I had not seen since I parted with him in San Francisco, now more than two months ago.

"Well, Señor Garnack," he said, grasping my hand warmly, "you have got back to us at last."

"I believe I have," I returned. "I don't know, though—it all seems like a dream to me."

"I had no idea of your whereabouts until that fellow Riablo came to us this morning. When I learned where you were, I followed up these fellows. I meant to rescue you at any cost. I would have fought, though, even if you hadn't been here. We didn't have much trouble with them."

"They didn't make much resistance."

"But how do you come here? I had no idea that you were out of prison. I learned only a few days ago that you were in Santa Rossa. I thought you were up north somewhere. I am now marching upon Arequipa. I mean to free the prisoners at Santa Rossa. I thought you were still there."

"I fear you won't do much good to try to free the prisoners at Santa Rossa. Those who were captured with me are doubtless now all dead men."

I told him the whole story of the shooting of the prisoners and my own escape. He became very grave as he listened, and then his anger burst forth like a lightning flash.

"They shoot my brave men!" he exclaimed, his eyes blazing. "They shall rue the day! They shall see what my revenge can be like! They consider us no more than petty insurrectionists now, traitors. But I will show them what we can do! Arequipa is my own home, the city of my birth, but it shall make no difference. They shoot my brave fellows! They shall rue the day! My name shall be written in Arequipa in letters that will blazon forth forever in her history. I will revenge the death of the brave men who died for my cause. A trail of destruction will mark my course. Our revenge will be swift and certain."

Paramonte's men had gained the battle with practically no loss. Not a single man was killed; three were slightly wounded. Of the government troops three or four were dead, and twice that number wounded. The rest, though, were dispersed and scattered. Paramonte's victory was complete.

There were perhaps three hundred of Paramonte's men. He was expecting, however, another detachment of considerable size from the east. Satander was with him. He did all in his power for my comfort, had my burns dressed with soothing lotions, and treated me with all kindness. He seemed so anxious for my friendship that I began to feel that I had misjudged him.

We remained in the village for several days, waiting for the reinforcements to join us. The burns healed rapidly, and by the time we were ready to march again they were almost entirely healed. Jack recovered more slowly. Riablo's wound was a mere scratch that gave him no inconvenience.

Paramonte was already virtually master of the south of Peru. His officers were in nearly all the provinces, with varying forces. The people were constantly flocking to his banner. While we remained in the village we enlisted close to a hundred new men. The people were incensed against the salt tax, and they were all against the government. In the country and smaller towns his influence was greater than in the cities and larger towns. Although it was Paramonte's native city, Arequipa was still intensely loyal to the government. Perhaps this feeling was augmented by the fact that there were more troops there than anywhere else in the south.

Paramonte meant shortly to bring together all his troops, and then to march north. He thought he would be before Lima before an army was collected large enough to check his march. He would take Lima and the government would fall with its capital. I was perfectly confident that he would succeed. He was a born leader of men. I would have followed him blindfolded and had no fear of the outcome.

At last Major Calcepes arrived with his division. There were about three hundred of them. One company was cavalry and the rest infantry. With this force Paramonte thought he would be able to take Arequipa.

The captain of the cavalry company had accidentally killed himself the day before they joined us, and I was put in command of the company. Jack was not given any place at all. I do not think Paramonte was very favorably impressed with him. Riablo had accepted Paramonte's service, and was a sergeant in one of the newly formed companies.

The next morning we started upon our march to Arequipa.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ATTACK UPON AREQUIPA.

We marched steadily in the direction of Arequipa for four or five days. By that time we were getting pretty close to the great city of the south.

Our entire force was something over seven hundred men. I felt that we were equal to any thousand men that could be brought against us. For the most part, the roads over which we passed were narrow and in wretched condition. Often we could only march in single file. Pack mules carried our supplies. The cavalry company was mostly occupied with foraging. We met with no resistance whatever.

We were encamped in a little open glade in the midst of the forests and the mountains. All about us great mountains towered up with their snowclad peaks standing out boldly against the blue sky. North of us the giant Misti towered up mightily, with the summit wrapped in fleecy mist. Beyond yonder flank of Misti lay the great city of Arequipa.

We had arrived there the evening before and made our camp. It was a lonely spot, well off from any of the traveled highways, and only approached by a mere trail through the forest. All day we had been arranging for our attack upon Arequipa, which was to take place that night. Now everything was ready for the march. Before many hours we would be in Arequipa. I was strolling along meditating thus, when an orderly came up to me, and said that General Paramonte (as he chose to be called) wanted me.

I hurried straight to Paramonte's tent. Major Calcepes was with him, and all the captains. Satander was one of the number. They were all seated around a camp table, upon which lay a crudely drawn map of Arequipa and the surrounding country. Paramonte motioned me to a seat at his side.

"We are considering the best plan for taking Arequipa, Captain," he said.

I glanced at the map with interest.

"The barracks are there," Paramonte observed, putting his finger upon the map. "There are four or five hundred troops in Arequipa. We want to surprise them if possible."

"I don't think it will be hard," observed one of the officers. "They won't be prepared."

Glancing across at Satander I thought I could detect a cynical smile playing about the corners of his mouth. An instant distrust of the fellow took hold of me.

"The shortest way to any point is the best way," he observed with a sage nod. "The Echenique road runs straight to the barracks and right into the heart of the town. We couldn't do better than go by it."

"Yes, it's the most direct route into the heart of the town," Major Calcepes observed, tracing the street on the map.

"I suppose it is about the best way," Paramonte said, with a keen glance at Satander, who looked frightened. "We will go that way anyhow, unless I change my mind."

Various details were discussed, and then General Paramonte dismissed us. I went back to my tent with a very well-defined suspicion of Satander's motives. I was wondering what he had really done to cause this suspicion when Riablo passed me.

"Buenas dias, Captain," he said, saluting.

"Why, hello, Riablo," I said, stopping him. "We've got work for to-night, eh?"

"Dios! it is glorious work!"

Just then Satander appeared in sight.

"Queer fellow, that Captain Satander," commented Riablo.

"What's the matter with him?" I asked.

"Nothing, so far as I know. Maybe I'm only a confounded fool, but I don't believe that man is what he ought to be. I was out on the picket line a little while ago. Satander comes along with a fellow he passes through the line. He said the fellow was going off on a scout, but damn me if I don't believe it was a scout for the other side. I've noticed queer things about this Satander before. Maybe he's all right, but I don't believe he's up to any good. I believe he's a spy or something of the sort. Maybe I'm only a confounded fool, though."

This might be a confirmation of my suspicions, or it might mean nothing out of the ordinary. I decided not to do anything now, but I meant to watch Satander closely.

By nightfall we were on the march. There was a full moon, and as the mountain atmosphere was clear, the night was almost light as day. For the first mile or two our course lay through the forest.

But directly we came out upon the high road which runs along the foot of Misti.

A few miles and we rounded the last spur of Misti. There in the valley ahead the glimmering lights marked the sight of Arequipa, the great city of the south. Our hearts beat faster at the sight. Little, we thought, did the people realize the terrible tragedy overhanging them.

We were rapidly approaching the sleeping city. Directly Paramonte rode up beside me.

"We are having a fine night to avenge our comrades, Captain," he remarked.

"It has that appearance now, General."

"I have changed my plan for capturing Arequipa," he observed.

"What do you mean?" I asked, surprised.

"It's just this. I'll tell you the truth. I have an idea that there is some dirty work ahead. I am half afraid that our attack is known in the city, and more than that is known. I mean the plan that we formulated this evening. Our secrets have been leaking out in some mysterious manner, though I can't tell through whom. That's why I'm going to change our plan at the last minute. I'm going to send you forward along the Echenique road with your company as a sort of a feeler. Then if there is a trap there, the other companies will not fall into it. If you see anything suspicious don't rush into it, but get out of the way as soon as possible. Above all, be cautious. Things may turn out all right, but I'm afraid not. Don't risk anything more than you can help. I mean to divide the rest of my force. I'll send one division after you to help you out if you get in a scrape and the other one I'll send around to the east of the city and have them enter it from that quarter."

"Very well, General, I have also had a suspicion that our plans were known. I hope that it is not so, but it's always best to be on the safe side."

"You are right. But don't be rash,and if you see any signs of an ambuscade, don't run into it."

Just then Satander happened up. He was manifestly nervous and agitated.

"What's this Major Calcepes tells me?" he demanded.

"That I have changed my plans?"

"Yes."

"It's true. You will take your company around to the Avenue de la Plaza and enter the city from the east. Captain Garnack goes ahead with the cavalry and I follow him."

Satander started, and I thought he turned pale in the moonlight. He glanced keenly at Paramonte and muttered something under his breath.

"Why, General," he added persuasively, "what's the need of this? Won't dividing your force weaken it? They can't know of our plans."

"Not unless we have traitors in the camp," returned Paramonte, with a keen glance.

Satander looked frightened. From that moment I never doubted his villainy.

"I don't want any further interference," continued Paramonte. "Go back to your company now. And you, Captain Garnack, advance with your men."

My troop of cavalry was already at the head of the long column of Paramonte's army. I gave the order and we surged forward at a smart trot.

In a few minutes we were in the suburbs of Arequipa. We entered the city at a quick, swinging trot. The dull light of the street lamps reflected a feeble glow from our burnished weapons and cast weird dark shadows about us. Despite the lateness of the hour many people were still on the streets. They seemed to be expecting something unusual, and as soon as we appeared in sight they set up a great shouting. I did not like this. They skurried away when we approached nearer, but their cries constantly increased in vigor.

On, on, we rode, heedless of the cries of the people. The clatter of our horses' hoofs upon the paving stones sounded hollow and unreal. Were the soldiers of the government waiting us, or was our attack the complete surprise that Paramonte had hoped for? We could not tell.

My men rode along, grim, silent and undemonstrative. They paid no attention to the people on the streets. Our business was not with them, but with the soldiers. The hubbub increased as we got deeper into the city. The bells of the churches and the great cathedral began to clang, spreading the alarm over all the city.

"The rebels! the rebels!" the people shouted. "The rebels are coming!"

Still we continued along the street. In a moment the excitement took hold of us, and we were eager for a fight. The horses caught the excitement too. They neighed and snorted, and we broke into a wild gallop. We could still see no signs of soldiers. I began to believe that we had taken the place by surprise after all.

The street was dark and deserted in front of us now. There were no lights, and no people on the sidewalks. Perhaps this ought to have been sufficient to have aroused our suspicions, but we hardly noticed it.

We rode recklessly forward, yelling and brandishing our sabers. We expected no ambuscade now. But a moment later I caught sight of what looked like a barricade that had been constructed across the dark street a hundred yards ahead. Before the troop could be halted, above the fearful din of the bells, roared out the rattle of musketry. What we had feared had come at last. From the barricade and the dark houses along both sides of the street red spurts of flame flashed out, vivid in the darkness. Bullets whistled about us like hail.

My lieutenant was telling a joke of some sort when the volley crashed out. It was never finished. He fell from his horse without a cry, stone dead. Half a dozen others were killed by that first volley. Others reeled in their saddles and cried out for pain. Horses fell, dragging their riders with them to the ground. We came to a halt. There was no facing that murderous fire. The horses reared and snorted, maddened by the whistling bullets. The merciless fire poured in upon us from every side. The red flashes lit up the grim faces of the soldiers behind the guns. I even thought I could detect a grin of malignant satisfaction upon some of them.

There were two machine guns on the barricade. Their steady, demoniacal whirr, sounding above the rattle of the rifles, was maddening. The ceaseless stream of bullets that poured from them mowed us down with appalling slaughter. The machine guns inspired more terror than all the rifles.

We were well into the death-trap before the firing commenced. We were altogether taken by surprise. We had half expected an attack like this, yet when it came we were not prepared for it. I could see no escape from that merciless fire.

The horses reared and plunged in terror. The men dropped off by the dozen. We made an attempt to return the fire, but what could we, on our plunging horses, do against those securely ensconced behind the barricades?

Already half our men were down before that terrific fire, killed, wounded or dismounted. The rest were huddled together in a terror-stricken mass. There remained but one thing for us to do, and that was to get out of that death-trap the way we got in it. No order was required to make the men comprehend this. An instinct told them what to do.

Jamming against each other in the melee, they wheeled their maddened horses. Everybody was cursing everybody else for getting in the way. Everybody wanted to be the first to get out of that hell-hole. I was no better than the rest. The whirr of the machine guns and the whizzing of the bullets about our heads thoroughly demoralized us all.

The merciless fire still poured in upon us. The ceaseless stream of bullets from the machine guns pursued us like grim fiends. The rifles all about us cracked ceaselessly. Men and horses dropped dead and dying all around us. The survivors only drove their maddened horses over the bodies of the fallen. Our one thought was to get out of that hole.

The surprise had been well planned. Had Paramonte's forces come in a body, they would have been massacred right there. All along the street along which we had ridden so confidently but a few minutes before now poured a terrific hail of lead. The red spurts of flame were flashing all along the dark street. It was a veritable lane of hell. We rushed along between the lines of flashing rifles, a mere horde of fugitives. It is now a wonder to me that any of us got out alive.

We rushed on at a full plunging gallop. In a moment we were confronted by a new force. This force had been thrown across the street and had piled up boxes and rubbish until they were fairly well protected. A terrific volley was poured into our ranks from this barricade. Half the few men who remained, it seemed, went down before that volley. We were completely trapped.

Our horses were maddened, and there was no checking them, even had we wished to have done so. We galloped on, and in a moment our horses were springing upon the rude barricade which had been constructed.

Rifles were discharged in our faces, swords slashed at our horses, and bayonets were upturned to receive us. One fellow discharged his rifle at my horse, just as we reached the barricade. The faithful beast, already wounded in a dozen places, sank to the ground. I was thrown over his head, but fortunately I landed on my feet. My sword was still in my grasp.

I slashed wildly about me, doing little damage, but keeping the soldiers at a distance. I must have perished right there had not Paramonte's men come rushing up. The government troops had the idea that they had intrapped all of Paramonte's force, and were surprised at the appearance of the newcomers. They immediately broke and fled as Paramonte's men fired a volley and rushed upon them. Soon I was with the rebels again.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SACK OF AREQUIPA.

Of the whole company, not more than fifteen came out of that hell-hole alive. Most of these were wounded more or less, but as for myself I was untouched. My company had gone to its destruction in that ambush.

Paramonte's troops now came up in a constant stream, from two directions. Major Calcepes had heard the firing, and he too was hurrying to our aid. Paramonte took in the situation quickly. Owing to their small force, perhaps, the government troop had only barricaded the one street. They relied upon their information as correct, and had been confident that Paramonte would walk into their trap.

Paramonte's men got around in their rear, and in half an hour they were driven from their strongholds and their barricades. In open fighting, Paramonte had the advantage of numbers, and he soon had the defenders of Arequipa totally defeated and scattered all over the city. Arequipa was ours!

The city was more silent now. The bells had ceased their clanging and the whistles their ear-splitting shrieks. There was little of the clamor and disorder that I had expected. There was a desultory rattle of scattering shots in different quarters of the city, where our men were pursuing the government troops, but otherwise the city was now fairly quiet. Men gathered on the streets conversing in awed whispers. Women knelt and prayed silently. No one made any resistance.

Here and there along almost every street, and in some places thickly, lay the bodies of the soldiers who had defended the city, a warning to the populace of what they might expect if they provoked us.

The barracks were in a large wooden building in the most thickly built quarter of the city, and not far from where the ambuscade had taken place. Our soldiers ransacked and pillaged it. At last some of them set fire to it. I don't know whether it was done out of pure wantonness on the part of the soldiers, or by Paramonte's orders. I think it was the latter. The walls were light, and the fire made swift headway. In a few minutes the flames had completely enveloped the huge shell of a building. They soon communicated to other buildings. No one made any attempt to check the mighty conflagration. The rebels merely looked on and laughed. They were making their power known in the city that had dared to remain loyal. The regular fire department and the citizen were afraid to move.

In a few minutes the whole surrounding square was in flames. It was a weird, grand sight. The great, devouring tongues of fire leaped high into the air, as if endeavoring to fasten their clutches upon the very heavens. The crackling of the burning wood was like distant rifle shots. Occasionally a wall or a floor would fall with a crash, and a million sparks fly heavenward. The roar of the conflagration was like a mighty waterfall. The heat was so great that it scorched the faces of those a block away. No one dared go near the burning buildings.

The fire cast a weird glow over all that portion of the city. At the windows of the houses were terror-stricken women and children, wringing their hands and clinging to each other, calling on God and the Virgin to protect them. Men who had scoffed at God and at prayer were on their knees, believing that the final day of judgment was at hand.

Paramonte's rebels were in all the streets. The weird light danced fantastically upon the glistening barrels of their rifles. Their faces were now black in the shadow, and now ghastly white in the full glow. We were like an army of phantoms. We half expected an outbreak from the people, and were prepared to put it down without mercy, but none came. Those who were not overawed by the glint of the rifles, knew well that any resistance would be sheer folly.

Directly our men grew more disorderly and impatient. Now that the fighting was over, they longed for the excitement of pillaging the city. For awhile the officers kept their men under control, but their lust for pillage was like water dammed up, ready to break forth with greater force when the restraining power was removed. Paramonte saw that the men would break forth sooner or later, and he allowed them have their way. Ranks were broken instantly, and they plunged into a carnival of pillage. They beat down the doors of the houses with the butts of their rifles, and ransacked every room, destroying wantonly what they did not care to take away with them. If any man stood in their way, so much the worse for him.

Women on their knees beseeching mercy for themselves and their children were brutally kicked into insensibility. The brutalities of these men made my blood boil.

They broke open the shops and stores and filled their pockets with money and baubles.

Only one or two officers ventured to interfere with their deviltries. Even then it was generally in vain. I remember one instance especially that passed before my own eyes. Half a dozen wild fellows darted up to the door of a large mansion. A white-haired old man met them at the door and ordered them to leave. He bore no weapons, but his voice was the voice of one accustomed to command. As by instinct, the men drew back. However, the next moment one of the more hardened devils of the lot sprang up with an oath and plunged his bayonet into the breast of the noble old man, who fell back without a cry.

A lieutenant—a noble young fellow—was standing by. Drawing a revolver, he confronted the men. His whole frame was quivering with rage. He stepped up to the ruffian who had bayoneted the old man, and before the fellow knew what he was about, the lieutenant had shot him where he stood.

The next moment, with a cry of rage, the fellow's companions sprang upon the lieutenant. They quickly bore him to the ground and literally hacked him to pieces with their bayonets before any one could interfere.

To make matters worse, some of them had broken into a wine shop and rolled out half a dozen kegs of liquor. The soldiers proceeded to regale themselves quite freely. No one dared to interfere. We knew that these soldiers cared no more for the lives of their officers than they did for the lives of the citizens.

I noticed that several of the houses were guarded by detachments of some of our own best troops. I supposed that Paramonte's friends lived in them. None of the pillagers approached them.

The pillagers had set fire to several of the houses after they had ransacked them, perhaps to hide crimes that even these devils were unwilling to have come to light. The flames spread rapidly. It seemed as though the whole city must burn.

For hours this slaughter and rapine continued. Men were shot down in cold blood, without provocation. The women fared even worse than the men. The officers might as well have tried to sweep back the waves of the ocean as to check their rapacity.

I witnessed that night deeds of heroism equal to those of the martyrs of old, and I witnessed, too, the blackest crimes that ever stained the name of an army. Unselfish heroism was mingled with hellish ferocity.

The horrible cruelty of the men sickened me. And I was one of them, too. In history their crimes would be my crimes. I pressed my hands to my face to shut out the awful sights. Just then half a dozen pillagers rushed past me. They darted up to a house near where I was standing. Riablo was among them; indeed, he seemed to be their ringleader. This was not the first act of horror that he had been engaged in that night.

The door of the house had been locked, but they beat it down with the butts of their rifles. One fellow was pounding away with his rifle when the weapon was discharged. The bullet passed through his head, killing him instantly. His comrades hardly noticed his fall.

In a moment the door fell in with a crash, and with shouts and curses the ruffians darted into the hall. I glanced up at the house. For an instant I saw the white, frightened face of a woman appear at the window, as if appealing for help.

Then the face disappeared. I heard the tramp of the plunderers and the clashing of their weapons. This was followed by a woman's scream. The voice had a familiar ring to it.

I had witnessed many a heinous crime that night, and done nothing to prevent it. But the cry of this woman roused the last spark of manliness and recklessness in me. I was sick of their crimes and my own position. After all, I reflected, I could die but once.

I drew my sword and revolver and darted up to the house. I sprang recklessly through the doorway. Had an army awaited me there, I should have tried to cut my way through it. I heard the curses of the ruffians in the room to my right. I had seen the woman's face in the window of that room. With my sword in one hand and a cocked revolver in the other, I darted into the room.

The room was dimly lighted by a hanging lamp. In the furthermost corner the woman was crouching, with her back to the wall and desperation written on her features. One of the fellows, a great brute, had seized her by the shoulder. She noticed my entrance.

"Oh, señor," she cried, stretching out her hands to me imploringly, "protect me from these ruffians!"

I recognized her then. She was the little woman who had aided Jack and me the day after we escaped from Santa Rossa. She had not recognized me, for my face was all blackened with powder. I sprang forward and darted between the ruffians and the woman. The fellow who had seized the woman I caught by the neck and hurled half across the room before he realized that I had interfered.

"Stand back! I command you!" I said.

They saw that I was an officer, and shrank back a little.

"You'd better leave us alone," Riablo said, glaring at me.

"You'd better get out of here!"

They muttered ominously together. I was considerably nonplussed. I had got into the thing, and I did not see any way to get out of it.

"You'd better let us have our own way, Captain," said Riablo, speaking as a friend.

"Your way be damned!" I roared, losing my temper. "I'm going to have my way!"

The six ruffians still stood there, undecided what to do.

"I'll kill the first man that advances a step," I threatened.

The threat was not without its effect. The men glanced uneasily at each other. Finally a big, hulk of a fellow stepped forward with a confident smile. I had not expected this open defiance. I had thought the threat would produce its effect without any real clash. I hesitated only for an instant. It would never do to show myself afraid to carry out my threats.

The big soldier swaggered confidently towards me, with a deprecatory leer. I was furious. I levelled my sword, and before he could throw up his gun to ward off the thrust, my blade had pierced his throat.

Half expecting a general attack, I quickly withdrew the weapon and sprang back, at the same time covering them with my revolver. With a gurgling cry, the big soldier pitched forward and rolled to the floor. The blood was pouring from his nostrils, his mouth and the gaping wound in his throat.

Riablo and the others were deeply impressed with their comrade's death. They saw that I was in earnest.

"Are you going to leave this house now, or will I have to run my sword through another one of you?" I demanded.

They muttered together, but never moved. I saw that Riablo was the ring-leader. I covered him with the revolver.

"Now, Riablo," I said sternly, "you are my friend; but leave this room, or I'll shoot you where you stand."

Riablo was perturbed, but he merely smiled.

"But, Captain Garnack," he said, saluting, "do you know whose house you are in?"

"I don't care whose house it is! Clear out!"

"This is the house of Colonel Aguilar of the government troops. It belongs to the enemy."

"I don't care whose house it is," I returned. "If you're not out of this room before I count ten, then I'll put a bullet through your brain. I mean just what I say, Riablo."

I started counting. One, two, three. Riablo looked about with some trepidation, and the others were terribly frightened. Four, five. Riablo was shifting nervously from one foot to the other. I noticed his hand clutching the lock of his rifle. I realized how great was the temptation for him to risk everything and try a shot at me. But I had him covered, and had he raised the gun I would have sent him into eternity in an instant. He knew this as well as I did. Six, seven, eight. My finger was on the trigger. I meant to carry out my threat to the letter. Riablo was still smiling imperturbably, but I knew that the smile was only a mask.

It is more than human nature can endure to stand up while some one counts off the seconds remaining of life. With a cry Riablo turned and fled, and his comrades fell over themselves in following his example.

Nine, ten. The five men were in precipitate retreat. I was alone in the room with the woman and the dead man.

When I made sure that Riablo and his villainous crew had really left the house, I put up my revolver and sword and turned to the woman. She was still standing in the corner, but just as I turned to her, the reaction came upon her. She swayed forward, her limbs seemed to give way beneath her. She would have fallen had I not caught her in my arms.

I carried the slender, fragile little form across the room and laid her upon a sofa. She was not wholly unconscious; the reaction had merely overpowered her senses. I had a flask of brandy in my pocket, and I forced a little through her lips. This quickly brought back her strength.

"Oh, who are you?" she cried in alarm, as she caught sight of my powder-stained face. "Ah, I remember you now. You are the man who saved me from those ruffians."

She sat upright.

"Is there anything more that I can do for you?" I asked.

"Your voice sounds familiar," she said, peering into my face. "Where have I seen you before?"

"Oh, madame," I cried, "don't you remember the man who so imposed upon you when he had just escaped from Santa Rossa? I was then Señor Bellarez, but my name is Garnack."

"Surely you are not Señor Bellarez," she exclaimed, blushing crimson at the remembrance of our parting.

"Señor Bellarez and Captain Garnack of the rebel army are one and the same."

She shuddered at the mention of the rebel army.

"But first of all I am a friend of yours," I made haste to assure her.

"I was sure you would come back to me," she said, with a vacant, dreamy look in her eyes, and a sweet, sad little smile on her face. "I have felt it all along."

"I am charmed to have the pleasure of seeing you again." She was a dear little creature, and I really believed that I cared for her.

"You probably saved my life," she said, smiling upon me. "I shall not forget it."

"I would go through fire for your sake."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a little gasp of mingled pleasure and pain.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" I continued.

"No, I don't believe there is," she said slowly. Her eyes were averted.

"If there is anything, just name it."

"There is nothing, Captain Garnack, that you can do," she said, sadly.

"Then I must be going. I must rejoin our troops."

"Good bye, Captain," she said, with a little catch in her voice. "You will come to me again?"

"Willingly, if you desire it."

"Yes, do!" she exclaimed, impulsively. "No, don't!" she added, with a broken sob.

I was strangely affected by this little woman.

"You haven't told me your name yet," I ventured.

The little woman flushed suddenly, and a look of pain came over her face.

"I hoped you wouldn't ask that," she replied, brokenly. "My name is Manuela Aguilar. My husband is in command of the government troops here." She hid her face from me.

"Your husband!" I exclaimed.

"Yes—oh, Señor Garnack, please go," she said, sobbing.

I touched her little white hand to my lips and glanced into her eyes, now glistening with tears. Her cheeks were crimson, and she averted her eyes. I knew then that she loved me.

I hurried away from her out onto the street.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST OF SANTA ROSSA.

There were none of the rebels on that street, but I could hear their shouts a short distance away. I hastened in that direction. The glare from the burning buildings still lit up the city with weird splendor, the blackest shadow one moment being light as day the next. It was Paramonte's token of power.

Paramonte was concentrating his men again when I found him. The narrow street was swarming with them. The officers were among them trying to reorganize them. They were glutted to their fill of pillaging now, and reorganization was not so difficult as it would have been an hour ago. Soon they were in something like regular formation, but there were many stragglers.

Directly some one of the officers—I think it was Paramonte himself—started the cry, "To Santa Rossa! To the prison! Avenge our comrades!"

A thrill of excitement passed over me. We would destroy the old prison where Barrez and the other brave souls had died for our cause! The men greeted the suggestion with a great cheer.

"To the prison! To Santa Rossa!" they took up the cry.

With wild shouts and cheers the column started forward. There were between three and four hundred of us. The rest were straggling. The prison was a considerable distance off, and before we had traversed half the distance the loosely formed lines were broken, and instead of an army, we were again a mere howling mob. The officers lost control over the men. They shouted and yelled and brandished their rifles until one would have thought they were demons let loose from the lowest pit of hell.

I was in the foremost rank, though the Lord only knows how I got there. I would probably have got out had I been able to do so, but I was wedged in between half a dozen yelling, demoniacal soldiers, unable to move in any direction but forward. We met with no resistance as we swept onward. If a man stumbled and fell, it was his own lookout. No one halted for him; no one offered any assistance.

Soon we were on the outskirts of the town, and the prison loomed up before us. Intoxicated by the prospect, we rushed straight at the gates. Our advance was not unopposed, though. Soldiers had been stationed outside the walls in anticipation of an attack on the prison. Crack! crack! came the report of their rifles. Bullets whistled about us, and one or two men pitched forward.

We scattered and rushed upon the soldiers. They were only a few in number, but they made a spirited resistance. A dozen of our men went down before their volleys. Still, our numbers were overpowering, and in a minute we were bayoneting the defenders of the prison. In five minutes all resistance was over.

We rushed up to the great iron gates, but they were shut, and we could not beat them down with our guns. The men procured a great beam from somewhere, and began using it against the gate as a battering ram. The angry soldiers swarmed up behind, eager to dash into the court-yard as soon as the gates were beaten down.

The impromptu battering ram was brought against the gate with all the force of twenty pair of hands. The gate quivered and shook, but it was well made and its fastenings were secure. It never budged.

This slow work did not satisfy the surging mob behind us. Everybody wanted to get into the prison immediately. Some of them rushed up to the walls and swarmed upon each other's shoulders until the topmost could see over the wall. At the same time the rattle of fire arms began to sound from the interior of the court-yard. I thought the guards inside were firing at the men who were swarming over the wall, but I was quickly undeceived.

"They've turned the prisoners loose and they're shooting them," the men at the top of the wall cried out.

There must have been quite a number of guards in the court-yard, for those who were fortunate enough to reach the top of the wall did not feel called upon to drop on over.

The delay was maddening. The men at the battering ram were still pounding away at the gate, but without effect. The steady rattle from within told that the prisoners were being massacred. In a moment there was a great shouting from the outer edge of the mob. A lane was quickly opened up for half a dozen men who had procured a keg of powder and a fuse from somewhere. They meant to blow the wall up.

Ready bayonets quickly dug out a hole of sufficient size in the base of the wall. The powder was rammed into it and the fuse affixed. Then one of the fellows struck a match and lighted the fuse.

"Stand back! Stand back!" they shouted. "For God's sake let us get away!"

A sudden panic seemed to strike the crowd. Everybody tried to scramble over everybody else in a mad rush to get away from the explosion. Those who stumbled were either carried on by the surging mob or trampled under foot and left to their fate. I was no better than the rest. I had been right in front and was consequently among those nearest the wall. Those further away were unwilling to make way for us, and we were jammed together like sardines.

I glanced hurriedly back at the wall. I was only a few yards away from it. The fuse was almost burned up to the powder. I tried to get further away, but could not. In a moment there was a blinding flash, a terrific roar, and the very earth beneath our feet trembled at the force of the concussion. Great fragments of rock were hurled into the air. Fortunately, most of these fell inward. Only one great block fell close to me. The man who had lighted the fuse was in its path, and he was crushed into a shapeless mass.

For a moment the mob was silent, as if held under a spell. Then the smoke slowly lifted, and we beheld a breach of several yards width in the high stone wall. Shouting and brandishing our weapons, we dashed through the breach. The debris was piled up in great masses all about the place, but we scrambled over the obstructions without noticing them.

Some twenty-five or thirty soldiers and guards were gathered about the prison, blazing away with their rifles. The outer door of the prison was open, and we could see the prisoners as they scrambled about in the corridor. There were many dead men among them, and the guards were still pouring volley after volley into the huddled mass. They had let the prisoners out of their cells merely for the sake of killing as many of them as possible before we could rescue them.

However, as we poured through the breach they turned upon us. They were desperate, for they realized that their lives were as good as gone. They expected no mercy at our hands. They fired at us as we swarmed into the court-yard with considerable effect. We did not reply to their fire, but we swept down upon them. Nothing could have stopped us. In a moment we were swarming around the few guards, slashing at them with our swords, running them through with our bayonets, and beating them down with our clubbed rifles.

The fighting was sharp and brisk for a few minutes, but nothing could have withstood the impetuosity of our assault. The fighting was soon over, and all the guards killed or taken prisoners.

What followed was all done so swiftly that it seemed only a hideous dream. The poor guards were given no respite. About a dozen of them were taken alive. They had hardly ceased fighting when they were lined up against the prison wall. Then, almost before they realized what we were about, the command to fire was given and their bodies were riddled with bullets.

Those of the prisoners who had not been killed by the murderous fire of the guards, swarmed out of the corridor. There were about a hundred of them, villainous looking fellows—men guilty of every crime for which civilization had a name. They would be excellent recruits for Paramonte's army, provided they could be broken even to our lax discipline.

Fifty or more of the prisoners, though, lay dead in the corridor, silent testimony to the ferocity of the guards. Half a dozen of our men hurried through the prison examining the cells to see that none were left behind, and dragging out the wounded.

Three great blasts were placed under different sections of the prison, which was built entirely of stone, and consequently could not be burned. We were forced back to the limits of the court-yard, and the fuses were lighted. There were three terrific explosions following in close succession. Great blocks of stone were strewn all over the court-yard. When the smoke lifted, all that remained of Santa Rossa prison was a smoking heap of blackened stones.

Our work in Arequipa was finished. Our men were brought together by patrols, and were formed into companies once more. Many were still missing, but we left them behind. Just as the sun was rising upon the sacked and plundered city, we marched out. The hundred prisoners we had released were with us. Many of our men were carried on stretchers, and others hobbled along with the aid of a cane or a crutch. All along the line bandaged heads were to be seen, and arms in slings. However, considering the amount of damage that we had inflicted we came off very well indeed, notwithstanding that my company had been almost totally annihilated.

As we ascended the mountain side, I looked back upon the plundered city. The flames were still raging at many points, but at other points it had gone down. Truly we had blazoned our name in letters of fire upon the memory of the good people of Arequipa. The night's work had been brilliant, yet damnable. Yet what was to be the result of all this pillage? Would it not bring enough troops to Arequipa to hunt down our little army? Before the month was over, might not we be facing a firing squad, even as those poor wretches down yonder had faced us? Who could tell what results were to come of that night's work?

I glanced with idle curiosity over the faces of the prisoners whom we had rescued from the horrors of Santa Rossa. Most of them were villainous looking fellows, but I caught sight of one who had a better appearance. Would wonders never cease? The man was the bluff, open-faced, yet traitorous Whitman. He saw me and recognized me.

"Why, Garnack!" he exclaimed, "this is a surprise! What the devil you doin' here? Thought you got shot back there at Santa Rossa."

"And what the devil are you doing here?" I returned hardly able to restrain my wrath against the impostor. "How does it come that you weren't shot with the rest of our fellows? I escaped, or I would have been."

"I was lucky," he said with a chuckle. "You bet I'm glad, now, seein' how things have turned out, that I was abducted, or whatever you call it, from the Sally J."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, they brought me up in person before their very august court-martial. They didn't consider me the hardened criminal that they did the rest of you fellows. I told 'em a most wonderful and eloquent pack of lies. I told 'em that I didn't know that the Sally J.'s cargo was to be used against their infernal old government, and that I was only a passenger, and a lot of rubbish like that. I threatened all sorts of foreign complications and dire disasters. I emphasized, as it were, the point that I hadn't done anything against their infernal old government, and that I had helped that spy of theirs to do his dirty work. They looked wise and considered the matter again. I threatened more, and they considered more. At last they solemnly informed me that they wouldn't shoot me like they was goin' to do the rest of you. Still, they thought it wouldn't do to turn me loose. I was a dangerous animal, what had better be shut up in a cage and looked at from a distance. They sent me back to the prison to stay there till they chose to let me go. God knows I never expected to get out of the place."

I did not believe what he was telling me. I pronounced him the most accomplished liar in all Peru. This tale was false, as the tale of his abduction from the Sally J. and being Jack's brother was false. He had been put in the prison to worm Paramonte's secrets from the prisoners, and now our raid had put him in still better position to learn these secrets.

I started to denounce him then and there as a scoundrel and a liar and a spy, but upon reflection I changed this plan. I always like a little gallery play, and an idea of that sort struck me. Jack had been left back at the camp among the mountains with half a company. I would take Whitman back there and confront him with Jack. It would be more dramatic.

"I'm devilish glad to see you, old fellow," I said as naturally as I could. "We've got a fine army here, and you will be proud to serve with it."

For two hours more our march was continued. I grew more impatient all the time. I kept up a friendly conversation with Whitman all the time, but it was all I could do to keep my anger from boiling over.

At last we arrived at the camp. Whitman expected nothing. I conducted Whitman straight to the tent where I learned that Jack was. I knew that there would be a scene, but I was afraid that Jack would play the coward again and mar its effect. I threw back the flap of the tent and ushered Whitman in. Jack was there. He was just preparing to go out and meet us. As Whitman caught sight of him, he stepped back and clapped his hand to his head as in pain. Jack evidently did not recognize the fellow, but I thought from the puzzled expression on his face that he saw something familiar in his face.

"Jack," I said calmly, "allow me to introduce to you the honorable Mr. Whitman, the man who has been palming himself off as your brother—oh, you villain!" this last to Whitman.

Whitman himself was very pale, and seemed to be laboring under some great emotion. His lips moved as if he were endeavoring to speak, but no sound came from his lips. With more bravado than

I would have expected of him, Jack stepped up to his false brother and shook his clenched fist in his face.

"Now, my friend," he said, with his voice below the ordinary, "whoever you are—God knows I haven't the slightest idea—I would like to know why you are in this country as my brother?" Jack spoke deliberately, pausing upon each word to give it additional emphasis.

"I—I——," Whitman began, but words failed him.

"If you are a detective," continued Jack huskily, "why, all you have to do is to say so, and one of us will never leave this country alive."

Whitman had recovered somewhat by this time.

"Calm yourself, my dear young man," he said, imitating Jack's deliberative speech. "I am no detective. I can explain everything."

Jack's thin lips curled into a contemptuous sneer.

"Explain, if you can."

"God knows everything I've done has been for your good!" said Whitman, speaking with agitation.

"In God's name, who are you?" cried Jack.

"My name is Alfred Raymond."

"You are Al Raymond?" interrupted Jack, his eyes dilating.

"That's my name, and now that you know me, it isn't necessary to add that my sister Nellie was your sweetheart. She sent me here after you."

Jack could not speak.

"Ever since I was twenty years old," continued Whitman, or rather, Raymond, "I have been in the employ of the Peruvian Nitrate Company. A few months ago I got a vacation and went home on a visit. I had left my sister Nellie a mere slip of a girl. When I returned she was a grown woman, pining away on account of a lover who had robbed a bank and then fled. She loves you, Jack, and if you——," Raymond suddenly checked himself, but his eyes flashed angrily.

"She wanted to join you somewhere—anywhere," continued Raymond. "She persuaded me to come down here and hunt you up, and then get you some place where she can join you. In that letter you wrote her, you said you had joined the rebels, or something of the sort. Now, I knew of Paramonte while I was in Peru. I ran across him in Chicago. He was buyin' firearms, and I had a pretty good idea of what he was up to. I thought that most likely you had got with him. That's why I entered his service. I had another reason. I won't deny that. Señor Garnack knows what it is, but it don't concern this matter. On account of this reason, I couldn't have got with Paramonte under my real name. As I had to go under a false name, I thought I would pass off as your brother. I could search for you with less suspicion then. Now you know who I am and why I am here."

"God bless you—and Nellie!" was all that Jack could say.

Jack said that he couldn't be of any use to Paramonte, and he was determined to get out of Peru and go to Buenos Ayres, or some place where Nellie could join him. Nothing could dissuade him from his determination. He wanted Raymond to go with him, but Raymond, for reasons which I could easily guess, said that he would stay with Paramonte. Indeed, when we were alone, he told me quite frankly that he wished to stay and serve Paramonte so well that the old man would allow him to marry Carmencita.

CHAPTER XVII.

MY JOURNEY TO MOLLENDO.

Jack wanted me to go with him to Paramonte and get him to consent to Jack's going away. Of course I could not refuse the request. Raymond's straightforward explanation had quite swept away all the suspicions that I had entertained concerning him. Everything that had seemed strange in his actions was now explained fully, and in such a frank, open-hearted manner as to enforce belief.

Still, that was not all. Raymond was in love with Carmencita: so was I. If Paramonte knew Raymond's real name and motive, his hopes of winning the old man's consent to his marriage with Carmencita would be gone. I did not believe that even as a suitor for his daughter, I was very obnoxious to Paramonte. If I disclosed Raymond's real name and motive, the field would be more open to me.

Then another thought struck me. If Carmencita was really in love with him, and her father refused to allow her to marry him, she might elope with him. In that case, all my hopes would be gone. Then, I really believed that Carmencita loved me best. Besides, I always liked fair play. I decided that I would keep Raymond's identity secret, and we would fight the battle of love with equal advantages. I knew that Raymond expected this of me; but then he did not know that I, too, was in love with Carmencita. Still, I resolved not to betray his secret. This resolve, however, amounted to nothing, as it proved.

Taking Jack along with me, I went to Paramonte's tent. As I had hoped, he was alone. He welcomed us warmly.

"Señor Whitman, here, as you know," I began, "escaped with me from Santa Rossa. He has just received a message from home. His brother—you remember him—was among those we rescued from Santa Rossa last night. Jack desires to go away now. His brother will remain. We came here to get your permission for Jack to go away."

Jack did not know or did not remember that Raymond still wanted his identity concealed.

"His name is really not Whitman, and he is not really my brother, but——," he said in explanation.

"Jack!" I cried, casting him a warning glance. It was too late to remedy matters now.

Paramonte started up in surprise. Jack saw that he had put his foot in it. He was frightened.

"Whitman not really his name?" Paramonte exclaimed. "Then what is his real name?"

We might still have concealed Raymond's identity by giving him a second false name, had Jack known that he wished to have that identity concealed.

"His name is Raymond," Jack answered with alacrity, giving me no time for a word. "He didn't mean any harm by passing off as my brother. He——"

"You say his name is Raymond?" Paramonte repeated, a troubled look coming into his face.

"Yes, sir; that's his name. I hope to marry his sister when I get away from here," Jack said, blushing.

"That's it, is it?" Paramonte said with a preoccupied air. "And doubtless he wants to marry somebody. You may go now, Señor Whitman."

Jack rose and left the tent. I started to follow him.

"No, wait a while, Captain Garnack," Paramonte said. "I want to talk with you."

I sat down. I knew that Paramonte at least suspected the truth. The best thing I could do was to make a clean breast of all I knew of the affair.

"What do you know about this fellow Raymond?" he asked abruptly.

"Only what he has told me."

"Has he ever been in Peru before?"

"He says that he has lived here from the time he was twenty years old until a few months ago. I think he was employed at Callao."

Paramonte's face assumed a stern aspect.

"It must be the same," he muttered. "I once knew of a man in Callao who was named Raymond."

"Did he look like this man?"

"I never saw him. I only knew of him."

"What kind of a man was he?"

Paramonte did not reply. He was meditating deeply. I was pretty sure I knew what was in his thoughts.

"You say that this Raymond wants to stay with me?" he asked finally.

"That's what he says."

"Very well; we will let him stay. We will watch him, though. He may be a spy or something. Don't let him know, if possible, that I am aware of his identity."

"I won't; but will you let young Whitman go? He's terribly anxious to get somewhere where he can join his sweetheart."

"Yes, I suppose he can go. He's not much good as a fighter, and I don't want to keep anybody against his will."

"Thank you, general; but what way would you suggest for him to get away? He wants to go immediately."

Paramonte meditated a while. A shrewd smile came over his features and he glanced keenly at me.

"I'll kill two birds with one stone," I heard him chuckle, "maybe three."

"The best way I see open for him," he said, after a time, "is to go back to Arequipa. He can take a train there and go to Mollendo. Doubtless there will be some vessel there that he can get away on. But, Captain Garnack, how would you like to go with your friend as far as Mollendo, to see that he gets away safe?"

"I'd like it very well."

"You shall go, then," said Paramonte, briskly. "Carmencita, my daughter—you know her—is staying with her aunt at Mollendo. I wish to see her, and for me to do this, she must come to Arequipa. I can't venture to Mollendo; it'll be risk enough to go to Arequipa in disguise. Still, I can afford to take the risk to see Carmencita again. You can go safely enough. Nobody knows you here as they do me. It's hardly safe for Carmencita to come to Arequipa alone. You never know what sort of people will be met on these trains. I shall ask you to escort her. She has another aunt, my sister, Señora Palfarmo, living in Arequipa. She is not implicated in any way in the revolution. Carmencita will be perfectly safe with her."

The prospect was pleasing. I would see Carmencita again,—see the woman I loved. I promptly accepted the proposition. A shrewd smile played about the mouth of Señor Paramonte. I was convinced that he knew, or at least suspected, the reasons for my eager acceptance.

Jack would have no delay. That very evening we set out for Arequipa. Although we were going into the city of the enemy, we were both in the best of spirits. We wore rough citizen's clothing. Our appearance carried out the character that we had decided to assume. We were two Americans who had been inspecting some mining property up in the mountains.

We encountered only a few persons until we drew near Arequipa. The great city was not altogether a pleasant sight. Great, black, smoking spots indicated the burnt area. The fire was still raging in one quarter.

The people only stared at us a little curiously, but they did not suspect that we were not what we seemed. Everybody on the streets was discussing the terrible calamity that had befallen the city. It was getting well along toward evening when we entered the city. We stayed at a large hotel that night. Our sleep was restless, but we were not molested.

The train for Mollendo left Arequipa early the next morning. We were on it. There was but one passenger coach, the most uncomfortable thing I have ever traveled in. There were not many travelers, but the car was pretty well occupied by the train men, of whom there seemed to be a host.

The distance between Mollendo and Arequipa by railroad is given as one hundred and seven miles. It took our train about ten hours to run that distance. The roadbed was bad, and the car without springs. It was equal to driving over a mountain road on a lumber wagon. The engine groaned and puffed, the cars creaked and strained, and the whole train went at a snail's pace. We had to stop once or twice to repair accidents. The constant delay was not conducive to sweetness of temper.

Shortly after leaving Arequipa the train crawled out on the treeless, waterless, lifeless desert. Hour after hour we dragged along over the same monotonous expanse of hot, gleaming sand. The desert seemed without beginning and without end.

At last we began to approach the coast. We swung through the cut, round the great curve and then slowly labored into Tambo, where I had fought my first battle on Peruvian soil. Little trace of the battle now remained. At last, about five o'clock in the evening, we rolled into Mollendo.

We learned from a gentlemanly sort of fellow whom we met on the train, and who was connected with a shipping firm in Mollendo, that there was a tramp steamer then in port. She would sail for Buenos Ayres the next morning. We went immediately down the water front and inspected the vessel. Our inspection proved satisfactory, the skipper was quite willing to carry a passenger, and Jack took passage.

After bidding Jack farewell, I went back to the city. He had written a letter to Miss Raymond, asking her to join him at Buenos Ayres, and I took it back and mailed it. Then I hunted up Señor Helaraz's house. It did not take me long to find the place.

I went boldly up to the door and knocked. A courteous, white-haired old servant admitted me. Just as I started to explain my mission to the servant, Carmencita herself appeared in the *patio.* A look of surprise came over her face. As she recognized me, she smiled and swept toward me. I thought she was going to fall into my arms—and certainly I would not have objected—but she merely grasped my hands and looked up into my face with a happy smile.

Señor Helaraz and his wife were also very warm in their greetings. They had heard something of my escape from Santa Rossa, but nothing authentic.

They were sorry to have Carmencita leave them, but if Señor Paramonte desired her presence in Arequipa, of course they could not object. They had heard of our raid on Arequipa, and plied me with questions concerning it. They agreed with me that Arequipa would hardly be a safe place for Carmencita.

"I think Paramonte did wrong when he made the attack on Arequipa," Señor Helaraz said, "or at least when he sacked and half destroyed the city. I heard just to-day that there are three or four thousand troops on their way to the south. One regiment arrived here just this afternoon."

"It might have been better for him to have kept his movements a little more secret. Still, a bold stroke like that at Arequipa has a great moral effect upon the people."

"That is true, but still the move makes Paramonte's position more precarious. He is like a man walking on the edge of a precipice. One false step may precipitate him to destruction."

"Paramonte is not the sort of a man to make a false step."

"Don't be too sure. In our mountains we learn that the most expert guide sometimes makes a false step."

I had no desire to remain in Mollendo longer than was absolutely necessary. Next morning, Carmencita and I were seated in the same car that had brought me to Mollendo. We had taken leave of Señor Helaraz, and the train was already under way. I learned to know Carmencita better in that ten hours' railway journey than I could have learned in ten months of ordinary humdrum acquaintance. The car was as uncomfortable as it had been the day before, but now it was heaven to me.

In reality, Carmencita was only half Peruvian. Her mother had been an Englishwoman, the daughter of an English engineer who had surveyed some railroads in Peru. She had died when Carmencita was very young. The greater portion of Carmencita's life had been spent under her father's care, and with some of her mother's relatives in England.

Time flew swiftly. I did not think the journey was half done when we were at Arequipa. I took Carmencita to her aunt's, and then decided to return to the hotel. I was undecided whether to spend the night in Arequipa or to go back to Paramonte's camp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME STRANGE THINGS.

As I hurried along I caught sight of Satander walking in the same direction, just in front of me. He had not seen me. I wondered what Satander was doing in Arequipa. I had my suspicions, though, and I decided to follow him.

It was not hard to follow him. He was not suspecting anything of the sort, and never looked around. He went straight to the hotel where I had intended going myself, and entered. I hurried after him. In a minute I was at the hotel entrance. I peered eagerly into the office.

Satander was there. Without looking round, he passed across the room and accosted a man standing there. This man wore the uniform of an officer of the government troops. I stopped stock still at the unexpected sight. Was Satander even now betraying Paramonte's plans to this officer?

Of course I could hear nothing of what was being said, but I might have learned the drift of the conversation by the gestures, had not just then two or three cloaked cavaliers strolled along. They started up to the hotel. In order to avoid suspicion, I had to enter with them.

I tried to remain unobserved, but in a moment Satander turned around and caught sight of me. His countenance expressed surprise and alarm. He whispered something hurriedly to the officer. The officer turned away from Satander hastily and left the room.

Satander hesitated only for a moment. With the suavest of smiles, he crossed toward me. Despite his smiling countenance his fingers were twitching nervously. He was very far from at his ease.

"Why, Captain Garnack," he exclaimed with forced cordiality, "I didn't expect to see you here."

"Who was that officer you were talking to?" I asked bluntly.

Satander shot a keen glance at me. I suppose he wanted to know just how much I knew.

"That was Colonel Aguilar of the government troops," he replied, with a nonchalant smile. He spoke as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world for a rebel to be having a friendly chat with a government officer. If I had expected to confuse him, I most certainly had failed.

I was very much astonished. Satander smiled superciliously as he noticed my evident surprise.

"You are surprised, Captain," he said.

"I am surprised, mightily surprised," I returned, not knowing what else to say.

Satander laughed.

"You thought I was a traitor, did you? Ha! ha! I don't blame you. I would have thought the same thing, if our positions had been reversed."

"Then what the devil were you doing?" I blurted out.

"Colonel Aguilar is a weak man. I have a great influence over him. I've been trying to persuade him to join us."

Satander said this so frankly that I was almost forced to believe it.

"I am going to return to Paramonte's camp now," Satander continued. "Are you going back? I would be glad to have your company."

"I hadn't intended to go till to-morrow, but there's no reason for staying here any longer, if you want me to go."

"Very well, I will go out and order horses for our journey," said Satander. "I don't care to walk."

He hurried away, leaving me thoroughly confused. He was gone an unreasonably long time. At last he returned, but not until I had begun to think that his going was only a ruse to get away from me. Even after his return, he had to attend to this thing and that thing that he had forgotten before. It was getting pretty near sunset when at last we started off on the road that leads along the foot of Misti. Satander was in no hurry, but he was nervous and agitated.

"I have a premonition that something is going to happen to us," he said, "that we are going to meet with some disaster. I hope not, though."

I laughed at his fears. At the same time I put my hand in my pocket and made sure that my revolver was there.

We were not far from Arequipa when the sun sank beneath the horizon. The twilight was short and darkness soon hedged us in. The moon had risen, however. We had no difficulty in finding our way. Satander was more disturbed than ever.

The horse Satander had secured for me was rather restive. I had some difficulty in keeping him under control.

Directly we were passing through a section of bushy forest. Suddenly four tall, black figures took form directly in front of us. They appeared so suddenly and so unexpectedly that they seemed to have sprung into existence right there by some supernatural power. I caught the gleam of rifles pointed in our direction. We were in the hands of the gentlemen of the road.

My horse took fright at the sudden apparition. He sprang violently to one side, almost unseating me. I believe it was this alone that saved my life. The report of four rifles rang out on the clear mountain air, so closely blended that the four were as one. The red flashes disclosed the grim dark faces behind the rifles. I saw that they wore the uniform of the government troops. The soldiers had turned bandits.

Their bullets whistled uncomfortably close to my head. Had not my position been changed so suddenly I would doubtless have received them in my body. As it was, though, not one of them touched me. Satander was also untouched.

I whipped my revolver out and fired at the men. At the second shot one of them uttered a howl of pain. They all turned and fled into the woods.

"They didn't have much grit," I remarked to Satander.

"No," he growled surlily.

We continued our journey. Satander did not seem to be very much pleased over our narrow escape. He remained sulkily silent all the rest of our ride. Occasionally I heard him muttering to himself, but he never spoke to me.

Soon we left the road and took the trail that led through the forest. Directly the sentry challenged us, but when he saw who we were he let us pass, even though neither of us knew the countersign. The rows of little white tents glistened in the moonlight. The campfire cast a weird glow over the men who were gathered about it.

Satander left me and went straight to his tent. I saw no more of him that night. A young lieutenant named Pando was the officer of the guard. I learned from him that Paramonte had gone to Arequipa early the evening before. He did not know what Paramonte's purpose was, but I was sure that it was to see Carmencita. With this information I went to bed.

I was pretty well fatigued and slept soundly throughout the night. The sun was well up above the mountains when I awoke. I made my scanty toilet, ate my breakfast and strolled out into the camp. I learned that Paramonte had already returned and went to his tent.

He greeted me with an excess of cordiality. As I had supposed, at the risk of his life, he had gone to Arequipa in disguise to see Carmencita. He thanked me profusely for having brought her in safety to Arequipa. He was anxious to know how I had been impressed with her. I hardly knew what answer to this question would be most politic. Then I risked telling the truth and said that I had never seen a finer woman. This seemed to please Paramonte. He rubbed his hands genially.

Had it been any other man than Paramonte I would have believed that he had sent me to Mollendo principally to throw me with Carmencita. At least I did not think that he would object to me as a son-in-law. I was distinctly pleased with this thought.

That afternoon I met Raymond. He, too, greeted me with warmth.

"So you've got back from Mollendo, have you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I'm back."

"And what of Jack?"

"He went off on a tramp for Buenos Ayres."

"What sort of a time did you have in Mollendo? Fine little place, that. Been there myself. Not equal to Callao, though, by a long shot. You found the railroad devilish rough, I'll wager."

"I had an enjoyable time," I said enthusiastically, "even on the railroad. Especially on the return trip."

Raymond was astonished

"Never knew a person to have an enjoyable time on that road before," he said. "Must have been some special attraction."

"There was."

"What was it?"

"Why, don't you know that Carmencita Paramonte came up with me from Mollendo?" I exclaimed, eyeing him closely.

He started and turned a little red.

"She is in Arequipa now?" he asked, with an awkward smile.

"Yes, she's staying there with her aunt."

"Glad to hear it, old man. You don't know what it is to be in love." He turned abruptly away.

Two or three hours later Paramonte sent for me.

"Sit down, Captain," he said, when I presented myself. "You remember what we said about Señor Raymond. I think there is something wrong about him. He has just applied to me for permission to go to Arequipa to-night. When I asked him why he wanted to go, he only made excuses. I believe he is up to some villainy. I want you to follow him. Find out where he goes and what he does. And, especially, if he tries to see Carmencita, find out as far as you can what passes between them. Don't let him know that you are following him, though."

So Raymond was going to try to see Carmencita. I did not know how to feel about it. About five o'clock Raymond left the camp. He was aiming to get to Arequipa just after nightfall. Evidently he did not want to appear on the streets in the day time. As soon as he had gone a little way I started out after him. I followed him closely, but I took care that he did not see me. He did not expect to be followed and I had little difficulty. He never swerved from his course toward the city. I followed him closely, but he never looked back.

Night had fallen when he reached the city. I had to draw nearer to keep him in sight. I followed him closely lest he should shake me off in the city. In a moment he turned off into a side street, and a square or two further on into a broad avenue. He followed his course with confidence. He evidently knew where he was going and how he would get there. He seemed perfectly familiar with the city. I followed him closely as he swiftly threaded street after street. He never spoke to any one and never halted. I was sure he had a definite purpose in view, and I thought I knew what that purpose was. At last my persistence was rewarded. With a quick glance about him, which showed him nothing, he hurried up to a large mansion.

As I had expected, it was the home of Carmencita's aunt, where Carmencita was staying. A servant opened the door. Raymond spoke a word to him and was admitted. If Raymond tried to see Carmencita, I was to endeavor to hear what they said.

For a moment I was at a loss for a plan. A light was shining from one of the windows of the house. I saw the shadow of a woman appear on the curtain. Most likely it was Carmencita. Taking care not to be seen, I sprang over the low railing which surrounded the yard and advanced to the house. I looked about again, but the street was deserted.

The curtain was not entirely drawn and I had a glimpse of the interior. Raymond and Carmencita were alone in the room. Raymond stepped toward Carmencita, as if to embrace her. I could hardly restrain my jealous fury. I could have shot Raymond then and there and had a perfectly free conscience. But no, Carmencita shrank away from him. I raised the window a little so that I could hear what they said.

"Carmencita," Raymond was saying, "don't you love me any more?" He could hardly speak, and I pitied him.

"Don't ask me that, please don't," she returned brokenly, covering her face with her hands.

Raymond crossed the room and placed his hand upon her shoulder. "My dearest," he said tenderly.

"Go away, oh, please go," she returned, glancing up at him beseechingly.

"Why, Carmencita, I—you——"

"Please go away. Don't ask me to explain anything."

"Carmencita, is it this fellow Garnack who has come between us?" Raymond demanded fiercely.

"Please don't ask me any questions. I cannot answer them. I cannot answer them."

"So it is Garnack," he said, tightening his lips. "That mean, dastardly, bloodthirsty devil of an adventurer!"

"Don't!" Carmencita said, raising her hands weakly.

"Do you love this infernal adventurer?" Raymond demanded.

Carmencita did not answer, but her lips twitched nervously.

I had a mind to put an end to the scene then and there by springing into the room and making myself known. I might have done this had not the unexpected happened.

Just at this most interesting point a servant appeared around the corner of the house. He caught sight of me crouching in the window. Doubtless he took me for a burglar. At any rate, he set up a great cry for help. It would never do to be caught there and marched off as a burglar. I took to flight.

The servant kept up his pursuit for a short distance. The street was deserted and no one joined him. Before long I was out of his sight. After scouting about for a few minutes I hurried back to the house.

Just as I appeared the door was opened and Raymond came out. Carmencita, a queenly figure, stood in the doorway. Her superb figure was proudly erect, and her lips were compressed. She was struggling to keep down her emotion.

"Then it is good-bye forever?" said Raymond brokenly.

I did not catch Carmencita's reply, but it was evidently conclusive. Raymond turned into the street. He went back over the same route he had come. His head was bowed and he seemed to find his way by intuition alone.

He went straight back to Paramonte's camp among the mountains. He never once stopped. By midnight we were both back in the camp.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNDERGROUND BATTLE.

The next morning we left our camp among the mountains and started northward. I had desired to see Carmencita again before we left, but this was impossible. It was Paramonte's purpose to join the detachments of his men who were at work in the northern portion of the province. Then, when his force was sufficiently augmented, he meant to march upon Lima.

We proceeded but slowly, however, and by a rather circuitous route. So at the end of a week we were not nearly so far away from Arequipa as we might have been. We did not encounter any government troops.

It was getting pretty well along toward evening. We were traversing a mountain valley, and we meant to go into camp soon. We were not far from a little mountain town by the name of Buco. We had heard earlier in the day that there was a small detachment of government troops at Buco.

"Captain Garnack," Paramonte was saying to me, "I want you to take that fellow Riablo and one or two others on a scouting expedition in the direction of Buco. See if there really are any troops there. Riablo doubtless knows the country. If there are any troops don't let them know you are about, if you can help it."

"Very well, General."

Paramonte proceeded to give me some more advice, not to fight unless it became absolutely necessary, and so on. He was still engaged in this when a mounted courier appeared. The fellow was dusty and dirty. He had evidently been traveling for considerable time. Paramonte recognized him immediately.

"Why, Arnel," he exclaimed, "what's the matter?"

The courier saluted.

"New troops are arriving in Arequipa every day! I thought that you had better know this."

"More troops in Arequipa already?" Paramonte exclaimed.

"Yes, General. One whole regiment had arrived when I left there. Two or three more are now at Mollendo or on their way to Arequipa. They have artillery."

"I didn't expect more troops in Arequipa so soon," Paramonte said with knitted brows.

"Will you go back to Arequipa?" I asked.

"I suppose it will be best. Colonel Romanique will get here to-morrow with four hundred men. That will give us twelve hundred in all, maybe more. Yes, as soon as Romanique gets here we will march back to Arequipa. We will defeat the troops there and march north again."

"We are sure to win in the end," I said.

"I hope so—but don't delay any longer. Take a few of your men and find out what you can about the number of the government troops at Buco."

Since my company had virtually suffered destruction in the ambuscade at Arequipa, there had been no cavalry division of Paramonte's army. I was in command of a company of infantry, whose captain was on the sick list.

I selected Riablo and two other young fellows to go with me on the expedition. Riablo was not so familiar with the region as I had hoped, but still I thought we could get along all right.

Just as we were leaving the camp, we encountered Raymond. So far Raymond had not been assigned to any command. I had not seen much of him since we had left Arequipa. He was rather gloomy and unsociable. But now the former bluff, open-hearted man appeared.

"Why, good afternoon, Garnack," he said with more cordiality than I had expected. "Goin' out on a scout?"

"Yes, I'm going to rustle up some government troops for a change. Paramonte has an idea that there's a company of them at Buco. Don't you want to go with us?"

"Don't care if I do," he said after a moment's hesitation.

I was really glad to have the fellow with us. Now that he had thrown off his gloom, he was a cheerful, amusing companion.

We trooped along merrily enough for an hour or two, laughing and chatting without a thought of danger. We were following a rough mountain trail, barely wide enough for pack trains to pass. There were many turns and windings in the narrow valley the trail followed, and we could never see far ahead.

We came around one of these abrupt turns, laughing and joking. Not a hundred yards ahead a company of government troops were encamped.

Unsuspectingly we had stumbled upon the very men we were seeking. For a moment we stood spellbound, but then we turned and fled.

"Halt!" they called out.

We only dashed along the more swiftly. When he saw that we did not obey, the officer in command ordered his men to fire on us. A volley rang out and bullets whistled all about us. One of the two young fellows I had taken with me was struck and pitched forward on his face, but the rest of us were untouched.

Resistance by four men against a company would be futile. Realizing that our only chance was to outstrip our pursuers and get to Paramonte, we only pressed forward with more speed. We had a fair start and the chances were not at all against us. The soldiers pursued close after us. For half a mile the race continued without either side making any perceptible gain. They fired at irregular intervals, but most of their bullets flew wide.

Directly, however, they began to gain on us. They knew the lay of the country much better than we did, and they made good use of their superior knowledge. We saw that we were sure to be overtaken before we could reach Paramonte.

A little side ravine branched off from the main valley a few rods ahead of us. The ravine was heavily wooded and the sides were steep and rocky. We would have some chance of concealing ourselves in the heavy forest. By general consent we all turned into it. It was slow work, pushing our way through the tangled undergrowth. For the first few minutes the soldiers gained upon us with alarming rapidity. But after they struck the underbrush their speed was checked and we were gaining once more.

We continued on in this manner for several hundred yards. We were climbing steadily. The narrow ravine had become a rock walled cañon. Still we continued on with all possible speed.

At last we came around an abrupt bend, and to our horror saw that the ravine ended abruptly a few yards ahead. There a precipice rose seemingly perpendicular in front of us, a barrier to any further progress. Abrupt cliffs also marked the sides of the ravine. Our escape was cut off. We were in a veritable *cul de sac*. We were dismayed.

“We are trapped!” Raymond exclaimed.
up there and stand them off,” Riablo cried encouragingly.

In a moment we were at the base of the cliff. Rocks and boulders of all shapes and sizes were scattered about on the ground. We meant to hide behind these rocks, but just then we caught sight of a wide arched opening at the base of the cliff. It was half concealed by boulders and masses of rubbish.

“Get in the cave,” Riablo called out. “We can
“Maybe we can hide ourselves behind the rocks
stand them off there.” Riablo was by far the coolest member of the party.

We dashed into the cave. It was wide at the entrance, but rather low. There was a great longitudinal crack in the roof. A hundred yards further in the cave suddenly contracted, and the passage was only a few feet wide and not high enough to allow a man to stand erect.

We took up our position there, crouching behind a ledge of rock. There we waited for the soldiers. They had seen us scramble into the cave and thought they had us cornered. We began firing upon them as soon as they appeared in the cave. The reverberations of the cave made the crack of the rifles like a mighty cannonading. The din was deafening. I never heard such an ear-splitting noise before. The red spurts of flame cut the gloom like sword points. The old cave roared and spouted fire like a mighty volcano.

The soldiers halted and sought shelter. Then they replied to our fire. The thunderings of the old cave doubled in volume.

For a few minutes the fight raged hot and furious. The powder smoke hung in great volumes about us. The red flashes of fire were all that could be seen. We were shooting more or less at random. It was a veritable Inferno. The second one of the young fellows was struck in the head by a bullet. Raymond, Riablo and myself alone remained.

Still we kept up the fight with grim persistence. The fire of the government troops was constantly augmented by new arrivals. Bullets whizzed about us, cut through our garments, kicked dust in our eyes and flattened themselves out against the rocks.

Suddenly above the fearful din of the rifles came a loud roar, an indescribable rumbling and crashing. The concussion from the continued firing had done its work. The roof was falling! The soldiers saw their danger and started to run. Before they could get out of the cave with a terrible crash the whole section between the narrow place where we were and the opening came down upon them. In an instant they were crushed beneath the weight of thousands of tons of rock.

When the echoes of the mighty crash ceased reverberating through the cave all was silence. We were not hurt, but we were cut off completely from the outside world. We were literally prisoners in that vast, black, silent place.

"Great God!" exclaimed Raymond. "What can we do?"

The mouth of the cave was completely blocked up. We were prisoners, and far worse off than we had ever been at Santa Rossa.

"What can we do?" I groaned.

"It might be worse," Riablo returned. "We might have been like those poor devils under that stuff."

"It would be a God's mercy if we were!"

"No use to get gloomy," Riablo returned. He deliberately struck a match and lighted a cigarette. I don't believe the fellow had any feeling at all.

"In most of these caves," he observed, philosophically, "there are two mouths—sometimes half a dozen. If there's not any other mouth—why, it's all over with us."

"Hope to God there is," Raymond exclaimed.

"The only thing we can do is to hunt for some other entrance. It may be a few yards off and it may be miles."

It was our only chance, and what a slim one!

Very fortunately I had an almost unbroken box of matches in my pocket. Raymond and Riablo each also had a few. There was no extra wood to be procured anywhere. At first we merely struck the matches, and when one had burned out struck another. We soon saw that at this rate of consumption our supply would be soon gone. We hit upon a plan to decrease this consumption. Both Raymond and myself had notebooks and letters and other papers. We tore these up and made little tapers out of them.

I took the lead, holding a match or a taper. The others followed close after me. The flickering light at times seemed only to aggravate the darkness.

There were but few branches from the main cave, and so we had but little difficulty in maintaining our course. We rarely spoke and when we did the hollow, unnatural sound of our voices frightened us. We kept trudging wearily along until I thought that the cave must extend clean through the Andes.

We husbanded our matches and paper in every possible way, keeping only the least bit of flame.

At length we sat down upon a ledge, exhausted. Our limbs were weak and trembling, and we were suffering from thirst. Riablo was bearing up best, but he was getting despondent.

"Listen!" said Riablo, after a period of gloomy silence. "Don't you hear something?"

I thought I could, but I could not distinguish what it was.

"I'll tell you what it is," exclaimed Riablo eagerly. "It's dripping water!"

"If it's water, then for God's sake let's get to it."

We had considerable difficulty in locating the sound. More than once we were thrown off the track altogether. But at last our perseverance was rewarded, and we arrived at the spot where a little stream of water was trickling through the roof above us. It was in a little side cave, but only a short distance from the main one.

We fell down and drank long gulps of the water. It was strongly impermeated with the impurities through which it had passed, but it was cool and to our parched tongues it was like nectar.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH.

However, we could not afford to waste any time, especially as our stock of matches was running low. We had started back to the main cave, when I noticed that the little stream which trickled down through the roof flowed along the cave in an opposite direction. A new thought struck me.

"Look at this water," I exclaimed, grasping Riablo's arm eagerly. "Don't you see how it flows along here? It must get out of the cave somehow."

"Yes, unless it sinks into a quicksand. That's not likely though. The best thing we can do is to follow it."

We had no difficulty in following the course of the tiny rivulet. Its course was very crooked, twisting around boulders. It was often dammed up by the inequalities of the floor of the cave. Often the ponds of water thus formed reached to our hips. In these the water was still and black, and there was no telling whether it was one foot deep or a thousand.

Somehow the presence of the little tinkling stream, now glittering brightly in the light, and now black in the shadow, gave us a sense of companionship. Hour after hour we pressed forward with as much speed as we were able, but it seemed all in vain. The vast cavern still stretched out before us, apparently without end. We were beginning to despair.

Our stock of paper was gone, and only a few matches remained. We pushed on with feverish energy. We never spoke, but frightful thoughts filled our minds. When these few matches had burned away, we would be left in that awful cave in complete darkness. At this thought a mad frenzy seemed to take hold of us. We laughed like mad men, and ran with all our strength. An imaginary outlet kept dancing before our eyes, tantalizing us. We reached for it, we ran toward it, and when, as if in mockery, it moved away, we cried out for it to stop. It was horrible!

Directly, with trembling hand, I struck the last match. When it had burned away, we would be left in the cave in absolute darkness. Our eyes were fixed in fascination upon the last match. The little flame crept slowly down the stick. We watched it as the bird watches the approach of the serpent, fascinated, unable to prevent the catastrophe.

When it was gone, our light would be gone and we ourselves—we shuddered at the thought of struggling about in the vast cave in utter darkness, bruising our bodies upon the rocks, and at last lying down in some corner to die. The prospect of death in any form is terrible, but this was death in its most terrible form. Our bodies would slowly waste away from starvation. The anticipation was as horrible as the realization could be.

"Great God!" I exclaimed. "It must not be so!"

The dark recesses of the gloomy old cavern only gave back the mocking echo of my cry.

Slowly the flame crept downward. The sight fascinated us. In a moment the flame began to jump and flicker. Our hearts beat harder and faster. It was the beginning of the end. Then with a last flicker the flame died away. The red glow for an instant cast its weird glow over our white, terror-stricken faces, and then it dropped from my fingers. It sizzed for an instant on the water and then it was gone. We were left in the midst of the weird, oppressive darkness of the mighty cavern!

None of us spoke. We merely stood there as if turned to stone, powerless to speak or act.

As we stood there in the oppressive gloom there was no sound to break the silence of the mighty cave, save the merry rippling of the little underground stream as it splashed by us. Directly, however, I became conscious of another sound, more of a distant rumbling, like muffled thunder.

"What do you make of it?" I asked of Riablo.

"I don't know. I have it now! It's the roaring of some of these mountain torrents!"

"Then let's get to it! This stream must flow into it. We'll follow the stream."

We caught each other's hands so that we would not be scattered in the darkness. Then we started forward through the impenetrable gloom. Not a ray of light entered the cavern. I could not even distinguish the forms of Riablo and Raymond. We had to go by feeling and hearing alone. The rivulet was our only guide. Hand in hand we plashed along through it, knowing that each step might precipitate us into a bottomless abyss.

The sound we had heard constantly increased and resolved itself plainly into the roar of rushing water. To our mind, if we could get to this stream we would be saved beyond doubt. We pressed forward with all possible speed. The roaring increased and in a few minutes it seemed to be at our very feet. A dash of fine spray struck our faces. We halted at this. It was well enough that we did so, for when I put my foot forward there was nothing but space beneath us.

For all we knew a step in any direction would plunge us into a mighty abyss. We threw ourselves at full length upon the rock by the side of the little stream we had been following and rested. We could hear the water rushing along just below us and feel the fine spray on our faces.

Strange to say, the darkness here did not seem so intense as it had further back in the cave. I crawled to the edge of the rock and cast a glance upward. Two great black walls towered up, but far above us I caught sight of the blue heaven and the stars. We had arrived at the end of the cave, and it was in one of those wild gorges or cañons of the Andes. It was night now, but when day broke we could see more of our surroundings.

Riablo and Raymond crawled out beside me and we feasted on the sight. Even as we watched, the tint of the sky began to whiten, and the stars grew less distinct. The dark gorge grew lighter and we could distinguish the rushing, swishing water below us. One by one the stars sank from sight, and day was begun.

Some fifteen feet below us we could see the wild, rushing, muddy water. On either side a little stretch of white sand intervened between the water and the rock walls, which towered to a dizzy height above us. A little way down the stream the gorge made a sudden turn. In a sort of a great recess in the wall there was a great mass of driftwood.

We scrambled down to the sandy beach without accident. The stream had a mighty current, but it was not wide. We could see that it was rising, however.

"The snow is melting up in the mountains," Riablo explained. "We'll have to work in a hurry or we'll be cut off yet."

"What are you going to do?"

"We'll build a raft of that driftwood yonder. Then we'll float down the river on it. We may get drowned, but God knows it's our only chance. But we must hurry. It'll never do to let the water catch us without the raft completed."

I can't tell how Riablo managed to construct the raft in the time that was occupied. I am sure that without his aid, it would have taken us years to make one so solid and secure. Riablo always knew the exact thing to do. He set Raymond and me to work getting logs of the right size of the mass of driftwood. He was searching for a sort of wood that he could twist or bend in any way he desired.

It was necessary to work with all speed. The river was rising rapidly. Before long the little spit of sand where we were building the raft would be flooded with water. Down there in that gloom-haunted cañon we worked like galley slaves. Raymond and I dragged up the logs and placed them in the form that Riablo desired. Riablo then securely fastened them together with his pliable wood. All this took time, but we wanted the raft to be secure. At last it was finished, but none too soon; the rising water was already washing round its base.

After having made it as secure as possible, we pushed the raft off into the current and our voyage was begun. We all had long poles to be used in warding the raft off from points of danger. We knew not what danger the next bend of the river might bring us. We were in the hands of Providence.

At first the raft only spun round and round, but then the current caught it and we darted away in the gloomy shadows. The current was swift, too swift at least for my nerves. The rocky walls between which the wild stream rushed now rose sheer out of the water. We could not have landed had we so desired. We must take whatever the river brought us. We kept a sharp lookout, but the current generally carried us where we wanted to go, and we did not have much occasion to use the poles.

The water was swift and rough. An occasional dash of spray flew over the raft, wetting us to the skin. I confess that I felt a sensation of uncontrollable fear as we drifted along at the speed of an express train, not knowing when a Niagara might yawn before us.

Directly the channel grew narrower, and the water rushed along with even more velocity than ever. At the same time rocks appeared about us. We had plenty of work keeping the raft free of them. With all we could do the logs kept scraping and grinding against submerged rocks. More than once I was sure the raft would go to pieces the next minute.

This sort of thing could not last forever. We all knew that it was only a matter of time till the crash would come. Directly we heard the mighty roar of water as it plunged over a precipice or boiled through a rapid. Walls of rock rose sheer on either side. All that we could do was to cling to the raft and take the chances. If it got through in safety, we would be safe; if it did not—I turned from the thought.

In a moment we were upon the rapids. The raft quivered for an instant upon the brink and then darted forward. A great wave broke over the raft, thoroughly drenching us. Whirling round till we were dizzy, grinding over submerged rocks, crashing against projecting ones, the raft continued its wild flight. We could not control it; we only clung to it with all our strength and let it take its course.

In a minute the end came. I was beginning to think the raft would pull through in safety, when all of a sudden there was a terrific shock, as we struck squarely upon a projecting rock. No human contrivance could have withstood that fearful shock. The raft quickly went to pieces, leaving us struggling in the water.

The water was icy cold. I managed to catch hold of a log. Riablo was clinging to the same log. We were almost through the rapids when the crash came. The current was less fierce about us now. It was the cold water that affected us most. We could see nothing of Raymond and presumed that he had been drowned.

The fearful cold was numbing my whole body. I felt my senses leaving me. My hands slowly slipped from their hold on the log. I did not care. Dimly I remember seeing Riablo reach across the log and grasp my hands in his, begging me to hold out a little longer. A film seemed to come over my eyes, there was a great ringing in my ears, and I knew no more.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying upon the bank of the river. Two men were bending over me, endeavoring to restore me to consciousness. One of the men was Riablo. The other was a great hulk of a fellow with flabby cheeks and eyes set in between layers of fat. I have seldom seen a man of more repulsive appearance.

Before long I was able to stand alone, although I was weak and faint. Then I was bundled off by Riablo and the strange man, who, it appeared, was an old friend of Riablo's. I supposed that the fellow had been connected with Riablo in some of that smiling villain's devilish work.

We soon arrived at the home of Señor Ayamayo—that was the fellow's name. It was only a little one-roomed hut with a thatched roof. We sat down and waited while a withered old hag prepared a meal for us. The fumes from the cooking tantalized me. I could hardly wait till the meal was prepared.

But at last the repast was set before us. I took no notice of the quality of the food or the cooking or of the old hag's dirt-encrusted hands. I was famishing. I ate with both hands, but even then my ravenous appetite was not satisfied.

Riablo was little better. Between us everything that had been placed upon the table almost instantly disappeared. Ayamayo himself hardly got a bite. The old hag looked on with her hands raised in holy horror.

Ayamayo knew nothing of the whereabouts of the rebels, although he was in sympathy with them. Your South American bandit is in sympathy with every rebellion. He thrives on them. It was only two days' journey to Arequipa, though. We decided to go there. Doubtless we could learn of Paramonte's whereabouts there, and we might be able to gather some valuable information for him.

The first thing we did was to discard our uniforms. We did not want those we met to know that we were rebels. Ayamayo secured for us suits of citizen's clothing of a respectable sort.

We remained with Ayamayo through the night. By morning we were fresh and vigorous. Sleep acted as a tonic. As soon as we had breakfasted Riablo proposed that we start for Arequipa that morning. Of course I consented.

We set off for Arequipa without any delay. Riablo knew the route, and we hurried along over the rough mountain trails with all speed. We met with no adventures on the way. We remained over night at a small wayside inn. We resumed our journey early the next day, and about four o'clock we arrived in the city of Arequipa.

We noticed that a large military camp had been formed just outside the city limits. Judging from appearance, I thought there were at least two regiments there.

We hung around the city, in low dens of vice principally, till after nightfall, and then we left it. So far we had been unable to learn any thing definite about the whereabouts of Paramonte's rebels. I was puzzled to know why Riablo wanted to leave the city, but the explanation was soon brought me. In a few minutes we were well out of the main city, and only a few suburban residences were in sight. Riablo pointed one of them out to me.

"We're running short of money," he said, eyeing me with a shrewd, meaning smile, "and that's a thing we can't get along without very well. So I think we'd better do a little business to-night. That place yonder looks worth while. We'll try it anyhow. I don't guess you object. I'll start you on your career as a burglar to-night."

At first I was inclined to refuse flatly to have anything to do with the proposed robbery. But then I reflected that we were really badly in need of money. Riablo was an expert in the art, and capture—about the only thing I really feared—was a remote possibility. Then I could not afford to offend Riablo by appearing over fastidious. I agreed to help him.

There was a little wayside wine shop not far from the house, and we entered it and lounged about, all the time keeping a stealthy watch upon the house Riablo had designated. A light was still shining in one room. It would not do to attempt anything till everybody was asleep. We waited for two hours, and the light still shone. I was beginning to feel impatient.

"It's gone out," Riablo announced at last. I looked up. The whole house was in darkness.

We waited for half an hour or an hour longer to allow everybody to settle down to sleep. Then we crept up to the house, taking care not to be seen. My heart was in my throat all the time. Burglarizing was a new art to me. Still it had a sense of danger about it that was exhilarating.

The doors were all locked and we turned to the windows. Riablo worked with cat-like stealth, and often cast angry glances at me when I overturned a flower pot, or did something equally awkward, making a great clatter upon the still night air. However, we were undiscovered.

Riablo unlocked the shutters, threw up a window sash, and clambered into the house. I followed close after him. Riablo had a little pocket lantern and he flashed it about the room. It was richly furnished. The home was evidently one of wealth, and distinctly worth while.

There was little here that we would want to carry away, though, and after a short search we passed into the next room. It was a dining room, and it was also richly furnished. Riablo took in everything at a glance.

"This must be where they keep their silver," he murmured as he placed his hand upon a latch.

The door of the closet was locked, but he quickly forced the lock and flung the door open. He had been correct in his surmise. The silver was there. We had fetched a large sack with us, and Riablo swiftly transferred the silver to this. He did this without the least noise, though, for my part, I don't see how he managed it.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

After Riablo had transferred all the silver to his sack, we ransacked all the other rooms on the first floor of the house. We did not find much that was worth taking away.

Riablo was determined to do his work in a thorough manner. He went upstairs, carrying his sack of silverware with him. I followed him. We entered the first room that came to hand. It was unoccupied, but as we entered I stumbled over a chair, which went crashing to the floor with a great clatter. Riablo swore furiously under his breath. We listened intently, but we could hear nothing to alarm us. Our confidence returned.

The room contained nothing of value, and with Riablo still swearing at me we entered another. A lamp upon a table was burning dimly. I lurched in first; Riablo followed me closely. Riablo uttered a cry of surprise, and darted away down the stairway, carrying the sack with him. I was too much surprised to move.

"Throw up your hands or I shoot!" a voice cried out. I beheld an elderly man sitting upright in his bed. He was in his night clothes, but he had a revolver pointed at my head. He repeated his command and I lost no time in obeying.

"That's right," he commented, with an ugly glitter in his eye.

Riablo had escaped, but I was a prisoner. Riablo had made considerable clatter as he dashed down the stairway and smashed through a window. I could hear servants rushing about below. Directly a girl with dishevelled hair burst into the room. When she caught sight of me, although I was covered by the man's revolver, she uttered a shriek and fled.

"They've taken the silver! They've taken the silver!" another servant wailed.

The old man's eyes flashed angrily.

"Tell Juan to run over and bring some soldiers here to take this man to jail. He is one of the burglars."

The servant looked at me curiously and then hurried away.

I was desperate. It is not a very comfortable sensation at any time to look down the barrel of a revolver. If I was taken to jail I would certainly be recognized as a revolutionist, and that would mean death.

I must get out of that scrape somehow. I cursed myself for not having taken the chances and followed Riablo. A dozen wild schemes for escaping flashed through my brain; but none of them seemed feasible. The man had his revolver pointed at my head and he would not hesitate a moment before blowing out my brains should I try to escape.

If I did anything it must be soon. Already I could hear shouting not far off. I supposed it was the soldiers that Juan had been sent after. I had two revolvers in my pockets, but with my hands above my head as they were, they might as well have been in Mollendo. If I lowered my hands, I would be shot. The soldiers were soon tramping about downstairs. I could see no avenue of escape.

Just as I was about to give up in despair the man made a move to get out of bed. He considered me sufficiently cowed, and allowed his aim to waver a little. I saw this and took advantage of it. Without a moment's warning I sprang toward the door. Crack! went the revolver. A bullet whistled past me, but it did no harm. I flung the door open and before the man could fire again I was out of the room.

In the hall I ran point-blank against a servant. He recognized me as the burglar and threw his arms about me to hold me. The soldiers were rushing up the stairway. I could not get away in that direction. I turned toward the front of the hall, where there was a window. The servant was still clinging to me, trying to retard my movements. I grasped him by the throat, jerked him loose and hurled him half way across the hall.

I sprang to the window. The soldiers were at the top of the stairway. Fearing that I was about to escape, they prepared to fire at me. The window was fastened down. I kicked out the frame and sprang through. I was just in time, for half a dozen bullets were sent after me.

The house was built after the prevailing fashion, with a sort of a continuous gallery running along the outside of the upper story, under the overhanging eaves. I landed on this gallery. My first impulse was to spring directly to the ground, but there were half a dozen soldiers there to receive me.

I turned and ran along the gallery. Those on the ground had not seen me and did not see me as I ran along. The soldiers were running about and yelling, as if the rebels had visited the place once more. Things looked dark for me.

At the rear of the house I could see no one. I crept to the edge of the gallery and swung myself over; then I dropped to the ground. The drop was not great and I was hardly jarred. A moment afterward a soldier appeared around the nearest corner.

"Here he is!" he yelled as he caught sight of me.

I jerked a revolver from my pocket and fired at him. He uttered a yell, clapped his hand to his shoulder, and started away as fast as he could run, yelling out that he was killed.

Others had heard his shout and were coming toward me. I made for the low fence at the back of the yard. Just as I vaulted over it soldiers swarmed about the rear of the house. They fired at me, but they were excited and their bullets all flew wild.

I started away as fast as I could run. The soldiers saw me and half a dozen of them started in pursuit. I had only gone a few hundred yards, when I made the discovery that I was going straight toward a portion of the camp.

Just as I made this discovery I came upon a hedge running at right angles with my course. I changed my course and started along it, straight toward the city of Arequipa. I was in the shadow of the hedge, and my pursuers lost sight of me. I could hear them cursing. They thought that I had gone in the direction directly opposite to the one I had really taken; or at least they hurried off in that direction.

As soon as I made sure that they were off my track I decreased my speed and regained my breath. I was not out of danger by a great deal. I might have remained where I was undiscovered till morning, but then I was sure to be captured. I must go somewhere. After some consideration, I decided that my chances would be best in the city, provided I could get to it without being discovered. I continued in that direction.

Before I could get to the city I would have to cross the road by which the soldiers had come from the camp. I was somewhat fearful of discovery at this point; but I could see nothing of any soldiers. To my mind, I was getting along famously, when suddenly a squad of soldiers appeared directly in front of me. The darkness had hidden them from me till now, and it was now too late to escape them. They caught sight of me and commanded me to halt.

I could not get away from them without a fight. A bold idea came into my head. I drew both my revolvers and cocked them. The night was dark, the soldiers had just been aroused from their slumbers, and their minds would be clouded. And then darkness is the parent of fear.

"Here they are, boys!" I cried at the top of my lungs. "Come on! We'll give 'em hell! Hooray!"

Brandishing my revolvers, I rushed boldly upon them. There were not so many of them as I had first supposed, not more than a dozen. My yells threw them into a sort of a panic. They saw me dashing boldly upon them, and quite naturally thought I had a number of rebels at my back. They quickly scattered.

I fired my revolvers, but did not do much damage. They fired at me, too, but I was untouched. Firing right and left, I darted right through them. They were preparing to receive the men who were following me. Before they realized that they had been duped, I was almost out of range, making straight toward Arequipa. They immediately started after me, though. I was unfamiliar with the ground and they gained steadily.

Before long they were close behind me, firing after me at intervals. Then I struck a road. For a road in Peru it was good, and upon it I made much better speed. Soon I was distancing them once more. I had emptied my revolvers in the first fight, but now I reloaded them as I ran, and soon I was ready for another fight. So far I had not received so much as a scratch.

I was drawing near the city itself now. The lights cast a dim, fitful glow over the streets. As soon as I came within the circle of light my pursuers began firing upon me, but none of their bullets touched me. The street was altogether deserted. There was no crowd for me to mingle with, nor was there anyone to oppose my flight. Occasionally a night-capped head was thrust out at a window, but that was the only sign of life.

The soldiers soon were rousing the whole town with their yells. Already a few daring souls were sallying forth and joining them in the chase.

Directly another squad of soldiers appeared in front of me. I was caught between two fires. A dark narrow alley, without light of any sort, opened out near me. Without hesitation, I darted into it.

I hoped that the soldiers would give up the chase, but they showed no such intentions.

The alley must have been considered merely as a convenient dumping place for all sorts of trash. It was so blocked that I could hardly pass. Once I stumbled and fell, but I quickly picked myself up and rushed on.

In a minute I arrived at the end of the alley and darted out on another dimly lighted street. This street was quiet as yet. I hurried swiftly, blindly along it. I could still hear the cries of the soldiers, but they were growing fainter all the time.

There were many abrupt windings in the street, and, rushing around one of these, I came face to face with still another squad of soldiers. Instantly I turned and fled in the opposite direction. They came rushing furiously after me.

I had gone only a few hundred yards when another squad—the one that had first pursued me—turned out from a side street just ahead of me. There was another side street near me, and I turned into it, momentarily expecting a bullet to put an end to the chase.

I dashed along this street, but the soldiers pursued me hotly. Bullets whistled by me and increased my speed. By this time I was greatly fatigued. I thought I would suffocate. I could hardly breathe. My lungs were like heated ovens. My heart was beating madly and the blood was singing in my ears. Sweat was pouring from my face in streams. I must soon succumb to exhaustion, if I did not get away from my pursuers.

I took a new direction at every corner, and frequently doubled on my tracks, but it seemed to be all of no avail. It was impossible to shake off my pursuers for more than a minute or two.

At last I managed to get my pursuers off the track for a minute. I was upon one of the principal streets. There was nobody in sight. I glanced about me for a place to hide. I started as I recognized one of the houses as the one where I had seen Señora Aguilar on the night of the sack of Arequipa. As I watched the house the front door was opened and a tall man of military bearing came out. I supposed it was Colonel Aguilar. I crept into the shadow, and he did not see me as he hurried away in the direction of the shouting.

A bold thought suddenly struck me. Señora Aguilar was doubtless still in the house. I would enter it and ask her to protect me. I knew she would not refuse. If she was not there, I might be able to conceal myself somewhere. They would never think of searching Colonel Aguilar's residence for me.

With a hasty glance around me to see that I was not observed I hurried up to the door and turned the knob. To my joy the door swung open. I hurried into the house and closed the door, just as several soldiers darted around the nearest corner. They had not seen me enter the house, and hurried into the next street, hoping to find me there.

There was a light in the hall from a hanging lamp. I glanced into the rooms downstairs one after another. They were all unoccupied, and afforded no place for hiding.

I passed upstairs to continue my search there. I turned the knob of the first door I came to and pushed it open. The room was brilliantly lighted.

A beautiful woman was sitting there in a rocking chair, with her tiny slippered feet crossed in front of her, gazing into vacancy. It was Señora Aguilar.

"What is the cause of all this hubbub?" she asked, evidently taking me for her husband.

As she saw me standing there, with my face livid and powder-stained, my eyes hollow, and my hair glued to my face, she uttered a scream of fright, and no wonder.

"Be calm, señora," I said as suavely as I was able. "I assure you that I mean you no harm."

Señora Aguilar had risen to her feet. She started at the sound of my voice and peered closely at me.

"Who are you—why, you are Señor Garnack!" she exclaimed, this last, I thought, with a little thrill of pleasure.

A loose wrapper had been thrown over her nightgown. Her neck and face rose from the soft folds of the gown and I thought that not even Carmencita's queenly beauty was equal to hers. She glanced tenderly at me out of her expressive eyes, and stepped forward as if to throw herself in my arms. I was quite willing, and held out my arms. She recovered herself, though, and only placed her hands in mine.

"How do you come to be here?" she asked, "and in this condition?"

I told her.

"I knew that you would come back to me," she said with a tender glance. "We were made for each other."

She was a dear little woman, and she loved me, I knew that. Moreover, I was in her power. I told her that she was the dearest little woman in all the world.

"And is all this noise about your being taken for a burglar?" she asked presently.

I nodded.

"My husband," with a flush of shame, "could not tell me what it was about. He just went out to see what was the matter, and you—I almost wish you hadn't come. What do you want me to do?"

"Hide me till morning. Very few people here in Arequipa know me. I can get away in the morning. But you must hide me till then."

"And why should I do this?" she asked, glancing at me with a smile.

"Is there not reason enough?" I asked, glancing into her eyes with a look of love.

"Of course I will hide you," she said. She glanced up at me with a happy light in her eyes. I thought she would throw herself into my arms. Just then a door was slammed somewhere downstairs. Manuela suddenly turned pale as death.

"What is it?" I asked. She had grasped my arm and was trembling from fear.

"My husband!" she gasped out.

"We must hurry."

"Yes, yes! Oh, he will kill me!" she cried, clinging to me. "You will not let him hurt me?"

"I am armed, and if he discovers my presence here, he will never leave this house alive."

She led me into an adjoining room, opened the door of a large closet, and motioned me to enter. I did so and she closed the door upon me.

Then all was silence.

CHAPTER XXII.

TRAITORS IN HIGH PLACES.

The next morning the city of Arequipa was again quiet. There was none of the clamor and tumult that had prevailed during the night. The soldiers were all back in their camps, and the streets were silent.

I knew that it was daylight, but I dared not leave my hiding place for fear of discovery. At last I heard a welcome step in the room without, and the door was opened. Manuela was standing before me, fresh and happy.

"Did you think I was never coming to let you out?" she asked with a smile.

"I knew that you would do what was for the best," I returned.

"My husband did not go away till a few minutes ago. Of course, I dared not come to you while he was here. He starts for the interior with his troops to-day. I shall be very lonely." As if by accident her eyes rested upon me.

I saw what she expected.

"You have me!" I cried, putting as much passion as I could muster into the cry.

She blushed very prettily.

"And now let's stop this fooling," I said rather harshly, I fear. I wanted to stop this love passage: I was heartily tired of playing the hypocrite any longer.

Manuela was a sensitive little creature, and she was hurt by my brutal words. Her eyes filled with tears and she looked at me reproachfully. I can never bear the sight of a woman in tears. And I pitied this pretty little woman who was so deeply in love with me. I went and took her in my arms.

"Don't cry, dearest," I said, soothingly. "I didn't mean to be harsh with you."

She laid her head confidingly upon my shoulder.

"I was afraid you did not love me," she said.

I suppose I ought to have told her the truth then and there—it might have saved a devil of a sight of trouble—but I didn't. I merely drew her closer to me and told her that I loved her better than life, that she would always be my own little Manuela no matter what separated us, and a great deal more that I don't just remember now. This produced the very effect that I had meant to avoid. She threw her arms about my neck and sobbed wildly.

"Oh, why did I ever marry him?" she exclaimed half hysterically. "I might have known that it would come to this! But I didn't think! I didn't think! He was rich and stood well in the army and in society. They told me that I would have wealth, social position—everything a woman could want, they said. I might have known what it would come to! I might have known! I did not love him! I did not love him! Oh, I might have known! He was never cruel to me, but—oh, I hate him! I hate him!" and she burst into a torrent of incoherent sighs.

I did not know what to do. I had never been in such a position before. I stroked her silken hair and whispered that it all might come out right in the end. I was afraid that some of the servants would hear her sobs and come to see what was the matter, but none of them appeared.

"My dearest," I said tenderly, "a cruel fate may separate us, but our hearts will be together for all time. You are my own Manuela. The fact that you are another's in name won't alter the reality." I was inwardly kicking myself for being the most consummate hypocrite on God's earth.

Manuela lifted her eyes up to mine and a happy light shone in them.

"Yes," she said, exultantly, "they may tear us apart; they may separate us as far as the heaven is from the earth, but they can never separate our hearts. I am yours now and forever. I love you! I love you! But," and her eyes filled with tears again, "it might have been otherwise. We would have been so happy together."

"It is doubtless for the best," I said. "The good God has willed it so."

"But we would have been so happy together. We would have had love—and—and everything. I am the most miserable woman on the earth."

"And I am a happy man, for I have the knowledge that you love me."

She struggled to her feet.

"We must part," she said, "but I am yours now and forever more."

"I must go where I will never see you again, but your image will always be in my heart."

I was really determined to get away from Arequipa just as soon as I could and go where I would never see her. God knows that I had already wronged her enough.

"Don't go away," she said pleadingly. "I cannot live without you."

"It is for your sake that I go."

"I suppose that is best, but I shall be so unhappy. When are you going?"

"Just as soon as I can get away."

"It may be for the best," she sobbed, "but before you go come and bid me good-bye. Let me see you once more."

I consented, and she put her arms around my neck and kissed me again. At the same time I resolved never to see her again, if I could once get away from her.

It was necessary to get away from the house at once. With Manuela leading the way I went downstairs. Just as we entered the *patio* we heard the shuffling of feet without. Manuela turned deadly pale, and I thought she was about to faint.

"It is my husband!" she exclaimed hoarsely. "He must not see you here. Come! This way!"

All trembling with fear she hurried me to a little alcove at one side of the *patio,* and pulling back the curtain which concealed it, she pushed me into it. Then she let the curtain fall back. It was a snug hiding place, but I confess that I was alarmed. I knew that there would be the devil to pay if I was discovered there. I drew my revolver and cocked it. Then I waited impatiently for the outcome of the thing.

By moving the curtain imperceptibly I had a view of the *patio.* I could see nothing of Manuela. In a moment the door opened, and two men entered. They glanced carelessly about them, but saw nothing. They were conversing about some matter when they entered. The foremost was a tall, broad shouldered man of forty, the man whose conversation with Satander at the hotel I had interrupted nearly two weeks before. He had the appearance of an ideal soldier, an automaton, a mere feelingless machine for fighting. His face was hard and expressionless as iron. If his appearance bespoke his true character, he was a man from whom all human passions and motives had been rooted out.

At first I was not able to distinguish his companion, but in a moment the face was turned toward me. I came near crying out. The man was none other than Satander. All my suspicions returned to me with renewed force. I strained my ear to hear what they were saying.

"So you think it's best for us to attack Paramonte at Aguadores," Colonel Aguilar was saying. His voice was rough and unmusical, suited to nothing but a word of command.

"That's the very best thing you can do. The only thing, too, if you really want to crush this rebellion. And the sooner you do it the better it will be. You'd better not delay any more than you can help, or you'll have another defeat like the one right here in Arequipa."

"That was your fault, though. We relied on the information you gave us. It was false. That's how it came about. If I had got hold of you that night, I'd have chopped your head off and thought I was doing a righteous act."

"I was mightily outdone that night. Old Paramonte must have been suspicious that something was going wrong. He gave out the plan that I suggested and sent you, but, damn it, when the time came he changed the whole thing. It was too late then to let you know about things."

"But we don't want anything like that was this time. How many men has Paramonte got?"

"He's got about eleven hundred in all. Old Romanique's command didn't pan out as well as he hoped. He hasn't got that many with him now, though, by a devil of a sight. He's sent old Romanique down south to Valle with four hundred. He thinks I'm with Romanique now. Romanique is to draw your attention, and get you to send troops after him down to Valle!"

"Then Paramonte means to make another raid on the city, does he, when our troops are divided?"

"That's exactly his plan. He thinks you'll send a thousand or fifteen hundred men after Romanique. Of course, that's about what you'd do if you didn't know the truth. Romanique isn't to fight if he can help it. Paramonte merely wants him to keep part of your troops engaged. Then the old man will capture Arequipa again with the troops he has left. He could do it, too. Those fellows are regular devils for fighters. Then after he's routed what of you are in the city, he will join Romanique, and together they'll crush the rest of you."

"That's a pretty good plan, and I'll be hanged if I wouldn't have done just what he wanted me to do, if I hadn't known that he wanted me to do it. We never would get this rebellion crushed out if it hadn't been for you."

"I don't believe you would. Even as it is, you've blundered through most of the things you've undertaken. Look at that thing down there at Tambo. That was a devilish bad blunder or something that somebody made. Why, after Rascor had warned them that there the Sally J. was to load and all about it—why, hang it, man, surely they ought to have done more than they did. You say that your men won, but, hang it, what did they do? Nothing but capture some prisoners and kill a few rebels. That did a devil of a sight of good, now, didn't it? You ought to have captured the Sally J. and the train and the supplies, and everything. You must do this thing better than you did that. Oh, I know that you didn't have command there, but you're all alike. If I was running things I would run them right."

"Well, if you were in my place what would you do now?" asked Colonel Aguilar, good humoredly.

"I'd wipe Paramonte up at one blow."

"Yes, I know. That's what anybody would do. But how would you do it? Let's hear your plans. You seem to know so much about how we ought to fight."

"Well, I'd take two or three thousand men and start this very day. I'd march straight to Aguadores. You ought to get there to-morrow evening. Then I would attack Paramonte anywhere I found him. You could cut his army all to pieces in one fight. Then you could turn on Romanique and the others and cut them to pieces one by one."

"Yes, your plan is all right, but such things are much easier said than done. Still I expect that's about the best thing we could do. Are you going back to Paramonte?"

"I've been thinking about that. I don't believe I will. Old Paramonte half suspects me now. So do some of the others. One of them is out of the way now, though."

"Who is it?"

"That fellow Garnack. You remember him? He was the fellow who interrupted us at the hotel. I made up a lie that satisfied him for the time, but he's out of the way now for good. We won't have any more trouble with him. I think he was killed the other day out scouting. Anyhow, he never came back."

"We'll start this afternoon for Aguadores. But come in here. The papers you wanted to examine are in here." They passed into another room.

I had absolute proof at last. Satander was by his own statement a traitor to the cause of Paramonte. I had expected this revelation, but when it came, it left me bewildered all the same.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHECKMATE.

I knew that Satander and Colonel Aguilar would not be gone long and so I did not stir from my hiding place in the little alcove from which I had been assured of Satander's villainy by the testimony of his own lips. I was trying to make up my mind as to the course I must pursue. One thing I determined upon without debate. If it were possible I must warn Paramonte that his plans were betrayed and get him to move away from Aguadores before Aguilar's troops arrived there.

I was still trying to make up my mind when Satander came out, and with him Colonel Aguilar, the husband of the woman who loved me. Colonel Aguilar passed so close to the alcove where I was concealed that his arm brushed against the curtain. I held my breath and gripped my revolver tighter. Had he discovered me I would have shot him then and there. But he passed on and I remained undiscovered. A moment later Satander and the Colonel passed out of the house and the door was slammed after them. I was mightily relieved.

In a moment, as soon as the footfalls of the two men had died away, Manuela appeared. A look of mingled fear and happiness was in her eyes as I stepped out to meet her. She put her arms around my neck and kissed me again and again. I returned her caresses with sufficient fervor, although it was strongly against my inclination.

"Ah," she said as she nestled her head upon my shoulder and her soft hair brushed against my cheek, "I was so afraid they would discover you. But I am happy now. Ah, I never knew what it was to love before. If only——"

"But I must go away now," I interrupted, "and I must never come back."

"Don't speak of going away," she begged, while her eyes filled with tears.

"But I must go. I must go to Paramonte and warn him. That fellow Satander has betrayed his plans. Your husband is going to march against him. He will start this afternoon. I heard all they were saying. Paramonte's force is divided. They want to whip Paramonte before his force is united again. Of course, there must be a battle soon. Paramonte wants to fight, too. It won't do, though, for all your husband's men to attack him now while his force is divided. It would mean certain defeat for Paramonte. Your husband——"

"My husband," she exclaimed a little impatiently. "Don't speak of him. I hope that there will be a battle, and that he will be killed. Then——" she said no more, but the look she cast me was more expressive than words.

"Ah, little one," I said, "I fear it will never be so. We must part and never see each other again. We can never be more to each other than we are now."

Manuela looked at me searchingly.

"Do you really love me?" she asked abruptly.

I started violently. I had expected no such question as this, and I was quite taken aback. Her pretty face was upturned to mine. Looking down into the face of the little woman hungering so for the love that had never been hers, how could I tell her the truth? It would have been a greater crime than I committed when I lied to her.

"Of course I love you," I responded. "I am yours alone."

She was silent for a minute.

"You must love me, at least while you stay here," she said, half seriously and half laughingly. "You see that I know that you are a rebel and all. If you should prove false to me, all I would have to do would be to tell what I know, and I would have my revenge." She looked up into my eyes with an innocent smile.

This was indeed a serious thought. This woman had me in her power so long as I was in Arequipa. I at once lost all desire for telling her the truth. She would never forgive the deception I had practiced. I must carry out the deception, or the house that I had builded might fall upon me.

"But you wouldn't do that, would you?" I asked.

"Why not?" she asked.

"One reason is that you would have to compromise yourself more or less in so doing. The most powerful one, though, is that you love me."

"So long as I know that you love me I—but if you were false to me—you don't know how vengeful we women are. But you love me! That is enough for me."

"No one could help loving you and no one could be false to you," I said with my best grace.

I was afraid that she would discover from my expression that I was really deceiving her, but she was blinded by the intensity of her own love for me.

"I must go away now," I said.

"And I will never see you again," she added absently.

"It is for the best."

"I know that, but I—" she choked up and could say no more.

"Wear this ring in token of my love for you," she added softly, after a moment's pause. She slipped a ring on my finger, and touched my hand to her lips.

"And my love for you shall last long as life is long," I returned earnestly. I was in reality deeply touched by the great love this woman bore for me. I was going away, I would never see her again. Then while I was with her was it not better to lie if lying would make her happier, than to tell the truth if the truth would make her more miserable? God knows I pitied her with my whole heart.

I kissed Manuela a last farewell, as we thought, and passed out into the street. She gazed after me with tearful eyes. A great lump rose in my throat.

I glanced hurriedly about me as I reached the street. I started as I saw Satander standing among a little group of men about two squares away. I did not have a good look at his face, for it was half concealed, and I was only about half convinced that it was Satander. He was looking in my direction, but he did not show that he recognized me. Still considerable apprehension was raised in my mind.

At first I was expecting to be recognized by every person I met. In this I overestimated my own importance, as I frequently do. The people only stared at me as a foreigner, and nobody realized that I was either a rebel or the fugitive of last night. Soon I was feeling more at ease.

My mind was all in a whirl. I wanted to go to some place where I could sit down and think over my course. With this in view I went to the hotel. I registered as Mr. Smith of San Francisco. I was assigned to a room on the second floor, and I went to it immediately.

I had not been in the room ten minutes when to my surprise there came a knock upon the door. Thoughts of the police and the like began to flash through my mind. With trembling knees I went to the door. Delay would benefit nothing. I opened the door, and Satander himself stood before me. I started back in surprise. I had expected to see him least of anybody. He seemed perfectly at ease, and smiled pleasantly as he entered the room and sat down without being asked.

"I just learned that you were in Arequipa," he said. "It was certainly an unexpected pleasure to see you."

He spoke in a perfectly easy and confident manner, but his eyes were fixed intently upon my face, and he seemed to be trying to read my innermost thoughts.

"The pleasure is mutual, Captain Satander," I returned with grave courtesy. "I did not expect to see you here."

"How do you come to be here?" he asked. "I thought you had been killed or captured up in the mountains. You didn't mean to desert us, I hope, Captain."

"No, I wasn't captured and I didn't mean to desert," I replied. "I came near being captured, though, and couldn't get back to Paramonte. I knew that he was coming down this way, and so I came here. It's a long story, though."

"I suppose you want to get back to Paramonte?"

"As soon as I can get back."

"You are a true man, Captain. If we had a thousand such as you and I Peru would be ours in a week."

I could not repress a smile as I listened to his protestations and remembered what I had heard him say an hour ago. Satander noted the smile, and his eyes gleamed angrily.

"General Paramonte is at Aguadores. I am going to join him. I would be glad to have you with me."

I was determined to show Satander that I knew of his villainy. I did not reflect what the consequences might be; I only thought it would put him in my power. I remembered our other journey from Arequipa and the government soldiers that had attacked us, and I saw a possible opening.

"No, I prefer to travel alone," I said. "I went with you once before, and we were attacked by robbers—or soldiers hired to kill me." This last was a shot in the dark, but I saw that it hit home.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, turning pale.

"Have you succeeded in persuading Colonel Aguilar to join us yet?" I asked with mock eagerness.

Satander saw then that the game was up and that I knew all. He hesitated for an instant and then stepped forward, shaking his fist menacingly. His voice was shrill and accusing when he spoke again.

"And what were you doing at Colonel Aguilar's house not half an hour ago?" he demanded fiercely.

I had not thought of things taking this course.

"Was I there?" I asked, to gain time in which to make up some satisfactory explanation.

He laughed harshly.

"Oh, I saw you come away. And whose ring is that you are wearing there?"

I hastily concealed the ring, but it was too late. The tables were turned with a vengeance. Instead of accusing him, I was completely at a loss to defend myself against the accusations he was leveling against me.

"The ring is mine," I stammered.

He smiled derisively.

"Perhaps it is," he said. "I have seen it before. Señora Aguilar is a very pretty woman."

I was at a loss to defend myself and Manuela from his insinuations.

"How much do you know?" Satander demanded a moment later.

I found my voice again.

"I know all," I said doggedly. I was not nearly so confident as I had been at first.

"All?" he repeated, with a slight catch in his voice.

"Yes, I know all. I know that you are a traitor to Paramonte and the biggest scoundrel in Peru."

Satander glared at me like an enraged tiger.

"What do you mean to do with your knowledge?" He spoke slowly as if each word required a physical effort.

I did not know what Satander might attempt. I put my hand into my pocket and grasped my revolver. The touch of steel gave me renewed confidence.

"I haven't decided yet," I replied calmly. "And if I had you would be the last person to whom I'd tell my plans."

Satander laughed harshly.

"I reckon you will want to go to Aguadores to warn Paramonte that he's going to be attacked."

"And what if I do?"

"My dear Garnack, I didn't think you were such a confounded fool as that. Yes, I am a traitor to Paramonte and a government spy and all that. I acknowledge it. I never have been anything but that. I went with Paramonte to the United States merely for the purpose of getting a chance to betray him. At San Francisco I might have got the United States officials after the Sally J., but that didn't suit us. We didn't want just to prevent the Sally J. from landing her cargo. We wanted to capture that cargo for the government. Paramonte himself didn't know just where the Sally J. was to land. If he had I don't reckon he'd have told me. I had to get somebody on board the Sally J. to betray her. I had already picked out a man for the work. I tried to get him on as a member of the crew. When I couldn't do that on account of that old Yankee he smuggled himself on board just the same. From what I hear he scared you fellows half to death. You thought he was a ghost. We might have captured you there at Callao, but we hadn't any idea that you were near until you were in the harbor. Then you got away before we could do anything. You know how the rest of it went. Yes, I am the biggest villain in all Peru. And I thank God that I have wrecked this infernal old rebellion. In ten days, Paramonte's army will be wiped from off the face of the earth. I tried to betray him that time he made the attack on Arequipa, but I failed. But I'll be damned if I'm going to fail this time. You won't prevent me either. I hold the trump cards this time. Now, you swear to me that you won't make any attempt to rejoin Paramonte or to warn him of anything. If you don't, all I have to do is to say a word and you will be killed or put in prison. I won't have any interference now."

I knew that what Satander said was true. He was playing for very high stakes. If I blocked his path, he would not hesitate to have me killed or put out of the way. I had been a fool for ever letting him know that I even suspected that he was a traitor. As it was, he had me completely under his control.

"And what if I do agree to not try to warn Paramonte?" I asked weakly.

"Well," said Satander reflectively, "I've got you under my control now. I can make you stay here and not try to warn Paramonte without promising anything. I could do it by force if no other way. Still, I'll be fair to you. But, mind you, if you break the agreement, it'll only be the worse for you."

"If I make any agreement I won't break it."

"If you make no attempt to rejoin Paramonte, or to warn him in any manner that he has been betrayed, you shall be at perfect liberty to leave the country. I will see that you won't be molested. But if you make any attempt to join Paramonte, it will be your death warrant. The best thing you can do anyhow is to get out of the country. You haven't got any interests here. The rebellion is doomed. No doubt about that. The best thing you can do is to go away. And as for your amour with Señora Aguilar, no word shall pass my lips. But it won't be good for her reputation or your life if you don't accept. My terms are liberal enough, I think. Do you accept?"

There was nothing left for me to do but accept. Not only my life, but Manuela's honor depended upon my acceptance. I could not betray her. Satander held all the winning cards. True, I had my hand on my revolver, and I might have shot him right there, but I knew that in that case, public as the place was, I would have no chance of getting away. If I accepted his terms I might get away with a whole skin, but if I shot him, I was certain to be hung. I was not ready to die yet. I accepted his terms.

Satander left immediately. For all his villainy he had a spark of honor about him. I felt confident that he would carry out his side of the agreement to the letter.

I inwardly kicked myself for being the most arrant fool alive for letting him know that I was aware of the depth of his villainy. But the thing was done now.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CARMENCITA PARAMONTE.

I was at a loss to know what I should do. I could not try to warn Paramonte that his plans had been betrayed. I had passed my word on that.

I cursed myself roundly for my stupidity in allowing Satander to know that I so much as suspected him. Had it not been for this I could have warned Paramonte very easily. There would have been no obstacles in my path.

As it was I was at Satander's mercy absolutely. Not only did my life depend upon my carrying out our agreement, but Manuela's honor. Had my life alone been at stake, I don't know but that I would have refused to make any promise, and taken the risk of defying him. I might have kept out of his clutches myself until I could get out of the city. But more than my life was at stake. I did not love Manuela, but I did not want to see her reputation injured, and Satander had that power.

I determined at last to go out into the open air and see if that would not clear my mind somewhat. The day was a beautiful one and there were a great many people on the streets. None of them recognized me, and I was not molested. I was confident, though, that I was being followed.

Directly as I continued along the street, I caught sight of a carriage approaching. The carriage had but one occupant, a woman. I recognized her immediately as Carmencita Paramonte. My heart began throbbing as I caught sight of her. She saw me also and recognized me. She smiled and drove toward me. In a moment I was at her side.

"Why, Captain Garnack," she said, as I seated myself beside her, "how do you come to be here?"

I told her of our terrible adventure in the cave and how we came to Arequipa. She listened to it all with rapt attention, and her eyes sparkled with interest. Very wisely, as I thought, I omitted all reference to Manuela in my narrative.

By the time I had finished my narrative we had arrived at her aunt's. At her invitation I entered the house with her. In her presence I came near forgetting my troubles.

"Do you know where your father is?" I asked. I hoped that she did not.

"No, I don't know where he is," she returned. "I have been alarmed for him of late. There are so many soldiers here. Father will win, though, when the fight comes."

"There will doubtless be more fighting," I said. "I wish I could join your father. When the fighting comes I'd like to have a hand in it myself."

"You might be killed," she said with a little gasp of some kind of emotion.

"Every soldier has to take that risk," I returned with a short laugh. "Anyhow I don't know that it would be much loss if I was to be killed."

She passed her hand over her eyes.

"Surely you do not want to be killed."

"Not exactly. But it wouldn't be much loss. What am I anyhow? A mere outcast. I have no country, no friends, no nothing. I'm only an adventurer. My sword is on hire to the highest bidder. Sometimes I think it would be a God's blessing if I was to get killed. No one would care. There's nobody cares for a poor devil like me."

"Perhaps you are mistaken," she exclaimed, quickly. "Perhaps someone does care for you."

A strange joy came over me. I glanced up into her eyes quickly. There were tears glistening in them. A rosy flush spread over her face.

"Do you care?" I asked bluntly.

She hid her face from me.

"I don't—I don't know," she said with a fragment of a sob, "but I don't want you to be killed."

I forgot everything, the dangers which surrounded me, the vows I had made to Manuela not three hours before, everything. In a moment I was at her side.

"Carmencita, my dearest," I whispered, putting my arms around her, "I love you! I love you madly! I have loved you since the first time I ever saw you. All you have to do is to say the word, and I will stay at your side so long as there is a breath of life in my body. Don't you love me, dearest?"

"I don't know. I can't tell. I have only known you a little while. It seems that I have known you a lifetime, though. If I don't love you, I don't love anybody else. I am always so happy with you."

"My own Carmencita!" I exclaimed rapturously.

I kissed her again and again. Heaven can be no sweeter than the next few moments were to me.

"Tell me, Carmencita, my dearest," I said, presently, "why you didn't want me to come from San Francisco with you on the passenger steamer."

"I wanted to tell you then," she said, with an absent look in her eyes, "but I could not."

"But you can now," I urged.

"You know Señor Raymond?" she said hesitatingly. "I met him while I was at Callao. He is a very good man. I fell in love with him." Her eyes drooped. "We became engaged, but it was without my father's consent. I knew very well that he would never give his consent. I thought I loved him truly. Perhaps I did. It's all behind us now. Father heard of it somehow. To keep us from meeting any more, he sent me to my uncle's in England. Señor Raymond returned to the United States. He met my father there, and joined his rebellion under a false name,—Whitman. He meant to serve my father well, and then ask his consent to our marriage. But when I came to know you I was sure that I loved you. I could not help it. I tried to remain faithful to him. I tried to forget you. That is why I did not wish you to go with us. I thought if you were absent I might forget you. Father did not ask Señor Raymond to go with us. He would have gone only too readily. The longer I was separated from you the more I thought of you, the more I loved you. I hungered for the time I would see you again. I was sure that I would see you again somehow. I believe that father wanted me to love you. I was half mad when I saw you among the prisoners at Mollendo. Then uncle got you out. I was so happy then. But you were captured again. That only made it harder. The next few days to me were days of agony indeed. At last I learned something of your escape from Santa Rossa. I was overjoyed. I saw nothing more of you till you came to Mollendo. That ride from Mollendo was the happiest day of my life. I knew that you loved me, or at least I was pretty sure that you did. Señor Raymond come to me the next evening. I told him all. He was terribly hurt, but he thanked me for having told the truth. He was a noble man."

"A nobler one never breathed," I said heartily. "I know how he must have felt to have lost you."

"Until lately I think my father wanted me to marry Señor Satander." I started. "He never said so in so many words, but he intimated that. I distrusted him, though. I loathed him. He frightens me whenever we meet. But I think father has given up that plan now."

"And who does he want you to marry now?" I asked.

Carmencita lowered her eyes.

"From what he said the last time I saw him," she said, "I think that he rather favors you."

"I hope that his plans will be fulfilled, then," I said, kissing her.

"I hope so, too," she answered, returning my caress with equal warmth.

"What do you think of Satander, anyhow?" I asked.

"I don't think that he means father any good. He says, though, that Satander is invaluable to him."

"Señor Satander is a traitor to him!"

The words came to my lips involuntarily. The next moment I remembered my promise, but it was too late. The words could not be recalled.

Carmencita started to her feet and uttered a little shriek of alarm. My back was to the door. I turned quickly around. As I did so, Satander himself appeared from the hall without. He had followed me and had been admitted without our knowing anything of it. Doubtless he had heard all that we had said. His eyes flashed and his face worked convulsively. He was a picture of wrath incarnate.

"So this is the way you keep your word," he fairly hissed between his set teeth.

Carmencita had retreated to the furthermost corner of the room. She was crouching there in fear. I put my hands in my pockets in a nonchalant way, but one of them was clutching my revolver. I fully expected Satander to try to kill me, but the touch of cold steel seemed to steady my nerves.

"I am not a traitor to the cause I pretend to serve, anyhow," I returned as coolly as possible.

"You call me a traitor!" he hissed again, advancing toward me.

"Be careful," I said, retreating a step or two.

He misconstrued this action. He thought that I was afraid of him. Mad with rage, he drew a little, keen-edged dagger from under his cloak. He sprang toward me as if to plunge it in my breast. He was capable of any crime.

"Now drop that weapon!" I commanded sternly. I jerked my revolver from my pocket and pointed it at his head. He hesitated for one moment. My finger crooked upon the trigger and I gave a gentle pressure. Never was a man nearer death than Juan Satander at that moment.

"Drop that dagger!" I cried again, "or you're a dead man."

Satander saw that I had the advantage. He let the little pearl-handled weapon slip from his fingers. It flashed in the air, the point struck the floor and stood upright, quivering.

"You shall suffer for this," he exclaimed wrathfully.

"Don't threaten me. My temper's none too good, and if you rouse me I may be forced to put a bullet through you. You'd better keep cool."

"Oh, yes, you're a very fine kind of a fellow with your protestations of love. You're as great a scoundrel as I am. Doubtless you made the same protestations to Señora Aguilar. Ah, you're still wearing that ring, I see."

"You seem to want me to put a bullet through you. I won't hesitate to do it. You'd better keep still."

"If you are a gentleman and an honorable man, much less a soldier, you will be willing to meet me on equal terms," he retorted, with sneering emphasis, as if to intimate that I would not dare to meet him.

I was exasperated.

"I'm willing to meet you any time," I said. "It'll give me pleasure to blow your head off."

"Doubtless, but that's a game that two can play at. When will you meet me?"

"By heaven, I'll meet you any time you choose. The sooner the better."

"It's now ten o'clock. At twelve be at the Misti Inn. You know where it is. If you don't you can find out easily enough. If you can get a second bring him along with you. If you can't come by yourself. You'll have fair play. Then we'll settle these little matters once and forever."

"And what do you want to fight with?"

"I don't care. Anything. Just so I can send you to Hades I will be satisfied."

I controlled myself with an effort.

"Say pistols, then?"

"That suits me. I am a dead shot."

"So am I."

"You won't be anything at one o'clock, after I've got through with you."

Satander tore out of the room as if a thousand demons were close upon his heels. The old butler was the only servant about. He was half scared to death.

I stood gazing after him and wishing that I had shot him where he stood. Carmencita recovered herself and hurried to my side, all pale and trembling.

"Don't fight him!" she implored.

I put my revolver back in my pocket.

"Yes, I must fight him. I won't play the coward. I will teach him a lesson."

"Don't go, my dearest," Carmencita continued pleadingly. "He will kill you. He is a dead shot."

"So am I. I am willing to take the chances. You would not have me be a coward, would you?"

"No, I don't want you to be a coward, but if you are killed, I will have no one. Please don't go."

"I won't be killed."

"But you may be. You don't know. What would I do if you were to be killed?"

"But I must go."

"Think of me. I——"

"Surely you don't want a coward for your lover?"

"Better a coward than a dead man."

"I will not be killed."

"I see that you are determined. I suppose I must submit. But do be careful. Oh, I should die if you were to be killed. I wish you wouldn't go."

"But I must."

I kissed her tenderly, perhaps for the last time, I thought. She put her arms about my neck and sobbed quietly upon my shoulder. Then I broke tenderly away from her, and hurried out of the house.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE END OF SATANDER.

I passed out of the house down onto the street. I took no notice of the people on the streets. As one in a trance I hurried along the streets, without knowing very well where I was going. Thus I continued onward for a block or two, when I was arrested by a hand being laid upon my shoulder.

"Garnack!" a voice said.

A great fear came over me. My first impulse was to take to flight. It was as much as I could do to restrain myself from following this impulse. Controlling my fears for the moment, I glanced quickly around. My apprehensions were all gone in a moment. The big, manly figure and jovial face of Raymond was before me. For a moment I thought I had seen a ghost.

"Raymond!" I gasped.

"Yes, it's me," Raymond returned lightly. "But what's the matter? You look like you'd seen a ghost."

"I thought I had seen one," I returned with a flickering smile.

"Ha! ha! that's a good one. I thought the same thing about you when I first saw you."

"But, Raymond, how on earth do you come to be here? I thought you were drowned back there in the rapids."

"I don't look like I'd been drowned, do I? I thought the same thing about you."

"But how did you get out?" I managed to ask.

"Luck's what did it, I guess. I always was luckier than I deserved. After we run on the rocks and the raft smashed up, two of the logs held together. Somehow or other I was hangin' onto them. At first, though, my head was all muddled up, and I didn't know much about what was goin' on. I guess I must ha' got hit on the head or somethin'. Anyhow, about the first thing I remember much about was hangin' on to the logs. I was down in still water then. Lord! but that water was cold, though."

"It was cold. I remember that myself," I said with an involuntary shudder.

"As I said, the two of the logs was holdin' together. I was holdin' onto them. Soon as I got sense enough I climbed up on the logs. They held me up, but they sunk pretty deep. Come to the end of the cañon in a few minutes. It was in an open country, but I didn't see any place where I wanted to land. Floated along for several miles that way. Then I saw a couple of men on shore. They waved at me and I landed. They were poor folk, but they treated me all right. I shan't forget 'em soon. They only had a little hut, but they made me share it with 'em. Told 'em I was a hunter or something of the sort. I don't exactly remember what. There wasn't any use of me lyin', though. They were for old Paramonte. Day before yesterday I started to come here to Arequipa. I would ha' joined Paramonte again, but I couldn't find out where he was. So I thought this'd be the best place to go to to find him. I just got here this mornin'. I was mightily surprised when I saw you."

"I'm devilish glad to meet you again."

"But what's the matter, Garnack? You don't look right. You're glum as a funeral."

"I've got a duel on hand at twelve o'clock. If you don't object, I'd like to have you for a second."

"And who might be the lucky man who has the honor to fight you?" he asked.

"That fellow Satander."

"The devil! Why, man, Satander's Paramonte's right-hand man. How did you come to get into a fight with him?"

"Oh, we quarreled over a little matter and he challenged me," I said hastily.

Raymond saw that I did not care to be questioned about the affair and he desisted, but I could see that his curiosity was excited to a high pitch.

"Of course I'll act for you," he said.

Raymond and I went back to the hotel where I had registered. We remained there until the hour I had promised to be at the Misti Inn had almost arrived, and then we hurried away in the direction of the Inn.

"If I come out of this infernal duel with a whole skin," I was muttering to myself, "and Satander is killed, I reckon that will dissolve our compact. It will for my part, anyhow. If I get out all right I'll try and warn Paramonte."

The Misti Inn was a small hostelry of not very good repute, in a thinly built suburb and isolated from the surrounding houses. It took us some time to get to the place. It seemed that we were expected, for a fat, evil-looking man met us at the door. He glanced at us with curiosity, but asked no questions. He motioned us to follow him, and conducted us through the Inn into a little courtyard in the rear.

Satander was already there, with a second and a surgeon. He bowed effusively to me as I entered the courtyard, and a sneer played about his lips. This irritated and maddened me. I determined to kill the man if I was able. Although he strove not to show it, I could see that he was nervous. This gave me courage.

With a passing tremor of alarm, I recognized Satander's second as Colonel Aguilar. What if Satander had carried out his threat and told Colonel Aguilar of the relations he thought existed between me and Manuela? Colonel Aguilar was eyeing me closely. I was confident that Satander had told him something. The thought of Manuela alarmed me more than my own personal danger. If I found out that Colonel Aguilar was aware of everything, the only thing I could do would be to fight him, and kill him if possible. Manuela must be shielded.

But Carmencita was also in my thoughts.

"If things go wrong," I said to Raymond, "I want you to be sure to protect Carmencita from that beast."

Raymond started and gazed at me searchingly.

"She shall be protected," he said, a little stiffly, I thought.

I have an idea that deep down in his bosom, perhaps unconsciously,. Raymond harbored a slight hope that I might be killed. Then he might be reinstated in his former place in Carmencita's affections. Raymond would have indignantly repelled the suggestion, but I think it was so.

I remained eyeing Satander while Raymond conferred with the surgeon and Colonel Aguilar. The conference was satisfactory, and in a few minutes the preliminaries were all fixed.

We were placed twenty paces apart. The revolvers were loaded and put in our hands. I confess that I was very fearful. Satander had the reputation of being a dead shot; it was no easy matter to face a revolver like his. He was very manifestly disturbed, though, and this encouraged me.

There was a steady, ominous glitter in Satander's eyes as he faced me. I did not doubt that he meant to kill me if he was able. Well, if I had to be killed I determined that I would die as befitted a brave man and a soldier. For my part, without the slightest compunction of countenance, I meant to do my best to put a bullet through his brain.

We were told to make ready. I cocked my revolver and steadied my nerves with a strong effort of the will. Then the word was given to fire. I took quick aim and pulled the trigger. I fully expected to feel Satander's bullet tearing through my body, but no, I was untouched.

It may have been chance, it may have been fate, or it may have been that my bullet was better aimed. At any rate, Satander clapped his hand to his breast, staggered a moment and then sank into a shapeless mass.

"A good shot!" commented Raymond.

Colonel Aguilar and the surgeon bent over Satander's prostrate form. The surgeon examined the wound. He shook his head gravely.

"He's stone dead," he announced. "Your bullet went through his heart."

The surgeon was a very gentlemanly sort of a fellow.

"This is a very unfortunate affair," he said to me, "especially as you are a foreigner here. Colonel Aguilar and I will try to keep the matter a secret, for a while at least. Isn't that right, Colonel?"

Colonel Aguilar hesitated and glanced keenly at me.

"Yes, I like fair play," he said. "This thing was fought out fairly, and Señor Garnack should be enabled to get away. I will help you keep his secret."

"Still, it is bound to leak out," continued the surgeon. "I don't want to see you suffer for a fair fight. You know how the authorities will feel. Your being a foreigner only makes it worse. If I were in your place, Señor Garnack, I would lose no time in getting away from here."

"I will follow your advice," I returned. "I will leave Arequipa as soon as I can."

"That is for the best. I hope that you will get away in safety." The surgeon grasped my hand warmly, and so did Colonel Aguilar, though I could see that he was suspicious of something.

Still holding my hand, he turned his eyes to it. I tried to jerk away, but he held my hand in a grasp of steel. The ring that Manuela had placed upon my finger was still there. I had meant to remove it after Satander had recognized it, but I had neglected to do it.

For a moment his eyes were fascinated by the ring, and then he turned fiercely to me.

"Where did you get that ring?" he demanded fiercely. I saw that he could hardly restrain himself.

I looked him squarely in the eye.

"I found it on the street," I said, thinking that the best explanation. "I didn't know where to find the owner, and so I put it on my own finger. Is it yours?"

"No, it's not mine," Colonel Aguilar returned with a harsh laugh. He dropped my hand and turned abruptly away from me. I could not tell whether he believed my explanation or not. Raymond and I hurried away from the Inn. I did not care to remain there longer than was necessary.

For some time we walked along without a word.

"Garnack," Raymond said at last.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Garnack, I want to say a word to you. I suppose you remember I told you I was in love with Carmencita Paramonte. Well, I was and I am. She was in love with me and she ain't. Nearly two weeks ago now I found out that she was here in Arequipa from you. I went to her. I thought she loved me still. She was brave enough to tell me the whole truth—that her affections were changed. She loved me no longer. She loved you instead, though God only knows why. Oh, I have it from her own lips! It hurt terribly, but it was better than if she'd acted the hypocrite. Garnack, do you really love this woman?"

"I love her with all my heart," I declared unhesitatingly.

He shot me a glance that seemed to pierce the very inmost depths of my heart.

"I believe you. I am glad that it is so. My love is not a selfish love. If Carmencita will be happier with you than she will with me, then let her marry you. Go ahead and win the girl. Perhaps you think it will make you emperor of Peru when the old man dies," with a bitter, sneering laugh. "But remember this! If you cause her any unhappiness, and I hear about it, as sure as there's a God in heaven, I'll blow your brains out."

Glancing up at him, I saw that there were tears standing in his eyes. With a short, half-maniacal laugh, he turned abruptly away from me. I could not call him back. I merely stood and watched him until he was lost from sight. Then I continued on my way.

I knew that Carmencita would be anxious about me and so I hurried to her aunt's to inform her of the outcome of the duel. Carmencita herself opened the door. As she saw me there unharmed she uttered a little cry of joy.

"Is it all over?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Yes, it's all over."

"You—are you hurt?"

"Not a scratch."

"I am so happy. I was afraid he would kill you. He is such a terrible man."

"He isn't terrible now. He's dead."

Carmencita passed her hand over her eyes.

"But you—aren't you in danger?"

"I am going to join your father. I have just found out where he is. I have come to say goodbye."

A few minutes later I left Carmencita and hurried away to prepare for my journey to join Paramonte.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PASSING OF PARAMONTE.

The main body of the government troops had already left Arequipa and were on their way to Aguadores. I supposed that Colonel Aguilar was with them. With the surgeon, he had promised to give me an opportunity to get away from Arequipa, and I was pretty sure that he would keep his word. Still I wanted to get away as quickly as possible. I did not know who Satander had revealed my identity to. I would not have been surprised had I been arrested at any time.

I learned that there were two routes by which I could get to Aguadores. One was direct, and the road in good condition. By this the distance was fifteen miles. The other was circuitous and rougher, and the distance was about thirty miles. The soldiers were marching along the first road. I could hardly hope to pass them without exciting suspicion. I decided to go by the more circuitous route. It was safer, and if I traveled hard I might reach Aguadores in time to warn Paramonte.

As I was making my preparations to go to Aguadores and warn Paramonte my conscience pricked me somewhat. I had promised not to do this very thing. But then, I reflected, Satander had considered that I had broken that promise when I made my unguarded expression concerning him to Carmencita. I had had to fight him for this very thing.

More, I was pretty confident that Satander had not kept his side of the agreement and had told Colonel Aguilar of the relation he thought existed between Manuela and myself. I allayed my compunctions of conscience with these reflections, and left Arequipa.

I was assured that a horse would never pick his way over the road that I was about to traverse, and I was forced to content myself with a mule. It was well along in the afternoon when I rode out of Arequipa. My road lay in a northerly direction. For the first few miles it was in fair condition, considering that it was in Peru. Soon, however, it struck a rougher region, and began ascending the mountain side.

Here it became a mere narrow mule path cut out of the mountain side. It was strewed with boulders of all shapes and sizes. It wound in tortuous curves along the mountain side, carefully choosing the line of least resistance, yet always climbing. Now it was skirting along the base of a mighty precipice, and a few minutes later creeping along the edge of another or the same. There was no forcing my mule out of a walk over such a pathway as that. I did not know at what moment I might be precipitated into an abyss. However, the mule picked its way without mishap; it was accustomed to this.

Without molestation, I reached a little wayside inn just before nightfall. The accommodations were poor and the house was already overcrowded. However, I got my supper, though the food was poor enough, and the privilege of stretching my limbs upon the floor. The mule had to content itself with a little forage and the mountain air.

At daybreak I was up. I ate my scanty breakfast, and was on the way before any of the other guests had awakened. I was now journeying over the wild sierras. The mountain peaks towered up about me in sublime grandeur. The clear morning sunlight disclosed them in all their beauty. I never beheld a more impressive scene.

I did not care much for the beauties of nature, though. My one object was to get to Paramonte as soon as possible and warn him of his danger. I urged my mule along with every sort of persuasion I could think of, but it seemed to me that the beast traveled with maddening slowness. Hour after hour passed, and it was well along in the afternoon that I learned from a man I met that I was only a few miles from Aguadores.

Shortly afterward the trail descended into a beautiful narrow valley among the mountains. I could see a pleasant little village nestling close down in the valley. I was convinced that this was Aguadores. I thought I could even see the tents of Paramonte's army.

Half an hour later I was startled—though I had expected it—by the *quien va* of a sentinel. At first I was afraid I had by some inadvertence fallen in with some of the government troops; but the man disclosed himself, and I saw with joy that he wore Paramonte's uniform.

I surrendered immediately and asked to be taken to General Paramonte; I had important news for him. The man called an officer. This was a young fellow with whom I had become acquainted during my connection with Paramonte. He promptly recognized me. Ten minutes later I was in Paramonte's tent.

"Why, Captain Garnack," Paramonte exclaimed, springing to his feet in amazement, "how do you come to be here? I thought all of you were killed at Buco."

"We weren't, though, General," I returned. "At least Raymond, Riablo and I weren't. The other two fellows got killed. I got away and came to Arequipa. I didn't know where you were, so I thought that was the best thing I could do. I don't know where Raymond and Riablo are. They got away from me. I haven't got time to tell the whole story now."

"But what brings you here in such a hurry? You have been traveling like mad. Has anything gone wrong?" Paramonte asked.

"Yes, General, something has gone wrong. Your force and your position and everything are known. They know that you have divided your force. The government troops are on their way here now. They must be somewhere near here by this time. I was half afraid I was too late. There are twenty-five hundred of them. All your plans have been betrayed."

"Who is it that has betrayed my plans?" he asked, his eyes gleaming ominously.

"Satander," I replied, "he——"

"Satander? Impossible. I sent him off three days ago with Colonel Romanique around to the south of Arequipa. They were to attract the attention of the enemy. Satander himself asked to go. Surely you are mistaken."

"He was in Arequipa yesterday," I returned.

"I heard him with my own ears reveal your plans to Colonel Aguilar."

"The devil! If he ever comes back here, I'll have him strung up to the nearest tree."

"He'll never come back," I said with a laugh.

"He's bold enough to risk anything."

"He's dead. I fought a duel with him yesterday morning, and killed him."

"The devil you did!" Paramonte exclaimed, angry at first. "I'm glad he's out of the way," he added.

"He won't trouble us any more."

"This is serious," said Paramonte with knitted brow. "I hardly know what to do. I've only got seven hundred men now. You say there are twenty-five hundred of the government troops. I can't afford to fight. They must be near here now. The only thing I see to do is to get out of the way before they get ready to attack us."

In a minute all was bustle in the camp. Men ran too and fro, in the greatest confusion, officers bawled out their orders, tents were struck and everything made ready to march.

Had I arrived an hour, or even half an hour earlier, we might have got away from the camp without fighting, but I came just that much too late.

Even as the preparations for retreat were being made the crack of a score of rifles suddenly burst upon our ears from some distance away, along the road that led direct to Arequipa, and over which the government troops were to come. There could be but one meaning to the sound. The government troops had arrived and they had struck our outposts.

It was not a good place for fighting of any sort. We were a little distance away from the village of Aguadores, deep down in a narrow valley. The mountain sides were thickly wooded; the valley was extremely narrow; no strategy was possible.

There was no possibility of retreat now. The government troops had arrived and we must fight. The half-packed luggage was dropped and left to take care of itself. The men hastily grabbed up their rifles and got into line.

I could see that Paramonte was depressed. All his confidence in his own ability seemed to have left him. He was uncertain what plan he should pursue.

In a moment the government troops appeared in sight. Our men fired at them, but they advanced steadily. The steady stream of government soldiers came rushing up, and our bullets produced no effect upon them.

Paramonte displayed an utter lack of ability. He seemed to be paralyzed. The mighty Napoleon of the south, as he would have styled himself, was mighty no longer. The men were all huddled in an unwieldy mass in the narrow valley, exposed to fire from every direction. And Paramonte did not seem to know how to change this.

The government troops quickly threw out detachments along the mountain sides. Paramonte made no effort to prevent this; he seemed hardly aware that it was being done. In a few minutes we were surrounded on three sides, and government troops were still pouring up. We were fighting against hopeless odds, but we could do nothing but fight.

Paramonte was unable to do anything, and nobody else dared do anything for fear of his anger, if indeed anything could have been done. The men were all huddled together in compact masses, exposed to a terrific fire, which they were unable to return with any degree of effect.

No wonder a panic came over the men. Under our conditions few veterans would have stood up before that fire, with no one to lead them, as it seemed, merely to stand there and be shot down. And Paramonte's men were not regulars. They were mere ragtags, brave enough personally, and good fighters when things are going well, but without cohesion. They broke and fled in every direction, many rushing right into the enemy's lines.

The government troops pursued close after us, pouring volley after volley into the disorganized mass of fugitives. Our men made no resistance. They knew that they might as well have tried to beat back the waves of the ocean as to check the wild pursuit.

I was no better than the rest. I was in the midst of the howling mob. We did not know where we were going. We merely wanted to get somewhere; the rest was immaterial.

Paramonte was close by me. He had no control over his men. The agony of defeated ambition was written upon his face. He realized full well that he was completely defeated, and that the mighty empire he was to found had crumbled to dust. True he had other troops to fall upon if he was able to escape this time, but they were but few in number, and they would be discouraged at the crushing defeat of the flower of his army. The people, too, would no longer be on his side, now that he was no longer victorious. He could never hope to regain the power he had lost.

Suddenly the noble old man threw up his hands, and swayed as if he were about to fall. A red stain was creeping over the white of his uniform. He had been hit. He swayed and staggered; I caught him just as he was falling.

I was at a loss what to do. The government troops were close on our heels, and their bullets were whistling about our heads in a most annoying manner. For a moment I had a mind to leave Paramonte to his fate, but a vision of Carmencita appeared before my eyes, and I staggered forward, supporting the unconscious form of my chieftain.

Now jostled by those behind, now stopped by those in front, I carried Paramonte along as well as I could. I knew that I could not carry this heavy burden long; but I could not bring myself to desert my chief.

A little mountain stream flowed through the valley, and we were swarming through it. I glanced down the stream. The banks were rather high and precipitous. A sort of a leafy tree grew along the stream to a considerable height. A sort of a narrow gallery was formed by these trees on one side, and the high, precipitous bank on the other.

There was no time to reflect. If I hesitated I would be borne on past the place by the surging mass of fugitives. Dragging Paramonte's body after me, I darted away from the mob into the half cave. I was confident that I had not been observed.

I hurried along this shaded gallery for perhaps a hundred and fifty yards. Then a bend in the stream shut off everything from my sight, save a stray glimpse of the hill opposite through a rift in the dense foliage. I could still hear the cracks of the rifles and the shouts of the fugitives and their pursuers, but no one approached my hiding place.

Once a government officer and a few soldiers appeared on the bank opposite, and I held my breath. Little did they think that hid beneath that flimsy curtain of foliage was the leader of the rebellion they were to put down and one of his officers. They quickly passed on.

I laid Paramonte out at full length upon the damp ground. He was still unconscious, but he was breathing feebly. I haven't much skill as a physician, but I was sure Paramonte could not live many hours. And the rebellion of which he had been the head would die with him.

I stanched the flow of blood from the wound in his breast as well as I could. The wound was plainly a mortal one. I had a handkerchief, and wetting it I applied it to his head. I dashed water into his face, loosened his clothing, forced a draught of brandy between his lips, and did everything I could to restore him to consciousness.

Finally my efforts were rewarded. Wearily Paramonte opened his eyes and gazed about him in bewilderment. He seemed dazed for a time, and only gradually recovered his full senses. He was fearfully weak and his breath came in short gasps. He could not survive much longer.

"Is that you, Captain?" he asked. He evidently thought he knew me, but was uncertain.

"Yes, it is I, General," I replied.

The cries and the tumult of the battle and the flight were already becoming fainter in the distance.

"We have lost, Captain," he said in a weak voice.

"It seems that way now, General," I replied, "but perhaps it isn't so bad as we think."

"Yes, we have lost the battle," he said, dreamily. "And Peru is lost!"

"Maybe not, General."

"Yes, Peru is lost, and I am going, too. No, you needn't say anything. I know very well that I am going to die. Well, if Peru is lost it is for the best."

"Let us hope, General."

"There is no hope. But, Captain Garnack, I have a trust for you." He was very weak and could hardly speak above a whisper. "Listen. It concerns Carmencita, my daughter. She may be in danger. When I am dead you must go to Arequipa. You must care for her. I think she loves you, Garnack. Get her out of Peru, if you can. She will be safer then. She is a good girl. You—"

His words merged into an indistinct mumble. I started to tell him that I had spoken to Carmencita, but before I could control myself again sufficient to speak he was unconscious. With tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat I caught the dying man's hand and watched him as his little remaining strength ebbed away.

He never recovered consciousness and never spoke again. His heart-beats kept getting weaker and weaker, and an hour later, just as the sun was sinking behind the mountains, and darkness was creeping over the grim scenes of the battlefield, the soul of the man who had meant to make himself and his nation great passed to its final resting place. Paramonte, the mighty, was no more!

CHAPTER XXVII.

MANUELA.

Paramonte was dead, and his rebellion had died with him. It was only a matter of time now until the whole of the rebel forces would be beaten. I realized this perfectly. I determined to go back to Arequipa, if possible, get Carmencita to accompany me, and then leave the country. I never wanted to see the country again after all my experiences in it.

After thoroughly dispersing the rebels, and pursuing them for considerable distance, the government troops had returned to the village of Aguadores and pitched their camp. Many of the rebels had been taken prisoners, and the rest were thoroughly dispersed. Their victory was complete. They had suffered but little loss, and were gay and happy. The light of their campfires cast a weird glow over the valley and the wooded mountain sides. They were but a short distance away from me. I could hear the songs and their laughter.

I wanted to return to Arequipa by the shortest route. To do this I would have to pass the camp. I hurried up the creek, keeping close under the shelter of the banks of the little stream. They were not on the outlook for fugitives, and I managed to skirt past their camp without being discovered by the sentries or any one else. It was pretty risky business, though. Once I had to pass one of them in the bank just above me. I saw him plainly, but I was in the shadow and he did not see me. My heart was in my mouth, though, until I was past.

Before long I had got well beyond the limits of the camp. As I could see no sentries about, I left the creek and started along the narrow road. I hurried away in the direction of Arequipa. The moon was shining brightly. I had no difficulty in finding the way. I trudged steadily forward for five or six miles, without once stopping. I wanted to put as great a distance as possible between me and the government troops.

By the time I had gone this distance, however, I was becoming fatigued. Certain that I could get to Arequipa easily the next day, I took refuge in an old barn by the wayside, and, casting myself upon the hay, I went to sleep.

I awoke early and was journeying on at daybreak. I got my breakfast at a little wayside inn. Although the people stared at me rather hard sometimes, they asked no questions. I pushed forward with all possible speed, and met with no incident on the way. Shortly after midday I arrived once more at the city of Arequipa.

The long, tiresome journey had been fraught with the anticipation of my meeting with Carmencita. I would have to break the news of her father's death to her as gently as I could, and then I would carry out his last suggestion and try to get her out of Peru.

As soon as I got to Arequipa I went straight to Carmencita's. Carmencita herself admitted me. A soft, radiant smile overspread her face as she recognized me.

"Was there a battle?" she asked eagerly. "How do you come back so soon? Were you hurt?"

"There was a big fight," I replied. "I was not hurt. Your father——" I faltered.

Carmencita turned deadly pale and clutched at my arm for support.

"Was he—killed?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

There was no use to deceive her.

"Yes, he was killed," I returned, bluntly, yet with all tenderness.

For a moment I thought she was going to faint. I put out my arm to support her. She recovered herself, however, with an effort of the will, and looked up at me bravely.

"How was it?" she asked simply.

"We were utterly defeated," I said. "I got to your father's camp just too late to enable him to make good his retreat before we were attacked. The government troops came upon us unexpectedly. They were four to one. Of course we couldn't hold out against those odds. Your father was shot. I carried him away and managed to conceal him. He died in an hour or so. The last words he uttered were for me to take care of you. He said he thought you loved me. He didn't know that I knew it, though. I meant to tell him, but he died before I could."

She was weeping silently.

"But don't cry, my dearest," I said. "You still have me. We will get out of this country, and we will leave all this behind us. Then—ah, then!"

"Yes, I still have you," she said, sobbing, "and you are more to me than anything else in this world."

She wept silently, with her head pillowed upon my shoulder.

"Sweetheart," I said at last, "we must leave Arequipa."

"Yes, we must," she said, with a tired little sigh. "I will never be happy here. I will go with you anywhere."

"We must go soon—to-morrow."

"If you say so, I will be ready."

"The sooner we get away the better it will be."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Yes, we had better go to-morrow. I think the best thing for us to do is to take a train from here to Mollendo. I don't think we will be suspected. At Mollendo we will go to Señor Helaraz's. We can stay there until a steamer comes that we can get away on. Then we will get out of your country."

"Yes, we will go," she said. "I trust you fully. I would follow you to the ends of the earth."

Had we desired to have left that day we could not have done so, owing to the fact that there would be no train to Mollendo until in the morning.

After some further planning I took my leave. Carmencita promised to be ready to go the next morning. I went directly to the hotel and registered under the name I had given before. I made inquiries concerning Raymond, but I could learn nothing of his whereabouts. I came to the conclusion that he had left Arequipa, but where he had gone I had no idea.

I spent the remainder of the day in getting things ready for our flight. I retired early, and despite my cares slept like a log that night.

Next morning I proceeded directly to Carmencita's. She welcomed me warmly, and we immediately started to the station. We would soon leave Arequipa behind us.

On our way to the station once I thought I caught sight of Manuela in the distance. A dim feeling of apprehension seemed to take hold of me. However, I was not sure that it was Manuela, and if it was, I reflected, the chances were that she had not seen me. I was uneasy, though.

We got to the station without incident. Something had gone wrong with the engine, and the train had not yet pulled up to the station. We passed into the dirty little waiting room to wait for the train. There was no one else in the room. There was no telling how long we would have to wait, so we proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as possible.

We were having a very charming tete-a-tete, when the door was again opened and some one else entered. The step was light, like a woman's. Vexed at having our tete-a-tete interrupted, I turned toward the intruder. My heart gave a great thump. It was Manuela!

She glanced quickly round the room as if searching for some one, and caught sight of me immediately.

"You here!" she exclaimed, passing her hand across her forehead. "I thought it was you."

Carmencita was regarding me with suspicion. Manuela made a move as if to throw herself in my arms. She had not noticed the presence of Carmencita. I stepped back.

"What is the matter, my dear?" she asked, with a look of reproach. Then she caught sight of Carmencita. "Who is this woman?" she asked.

Both women were perplexed; so was I. They glanced alternately at me and at each other. My brain was thoroughly befuddled. I did not know what to do. A cold perspiration was standing out all over my body. Carmencita's ready mind took in the situation quickly. Manuela was slower in comprehending it.

"What does this mean?" Carmencita asked, turning to me for an explanation. She had risen and was standing majestically erect. She looked every inch a queen then. I was cowed by her piercing glance.

"I—I—you—that is——" I stammered in the greatest confusion. All power of speech seemed to have deserted me. I was at a complete loss for an explanation that would satisfy either of them.

I glanced at Manuela. Tears were standing in her eyes. "Yes, what is the meaning of her being here with you?" she asked, passionately, indicating Carmencita by a gesture.

I could not speak. My tongue seemed to be paralyzed and refused to act. I had an uncontrollable impulse to run away and leave the two women to make the best explanation they could, but my limbs refused to move. I stood there as if rooted to the floor.

"Can't you speak?" demanded Carmencita, harshly.

I could not.

"What is he to you?" Carmencita asked, suddenly turning upon Manuela, and speaking with fierce energy.

Manuela cowered before her glance. She crept up to my side and clung to my arm. I tried to jerk away from her, but my strength failed me. I could only stand there like a complete fool, unable to do anything.

"He is mine! He loves me! He said he did," Manuela said, brokenly. Her great, beautiful eyes, all swimming in tears, were turned up to mine with a look of supplication that was pitiful. "Don't you, dearest?"

The pathos of that voice would have moved a heart of granite. Tears came to my eyes. I tried to speak, but the words choked in my throat. I glanced at Carmencita, but I could not bear her steady, passionate gaze and I had to turn away.

"Have you deceived me?" she asked, her breath coming in short, quick gasps. "Is what this woman says true?"

She was struggling to control her emotion, and she succeeded. She stood there calm and stolid to all appearances, but I knew that this was only a mask.

I glanced from Carmencita's stolid, commanding figure to the little trembling, fearful woman at my side. She trusted me still, I could see that in the eyes that were so pitifully upturned to mine. Great heavens! I could not crush that tender little heart, hungering so for the love that had never been hers.

I did not love Manuela, but I pitied her. I pitied her with my whole heart, and all the strength of my nature. Could I so cruelly shatter the faith and confidence she had in me? I never thought of the power that she exerted over me, that she could have had me cast into prison. Nothing of this influenced me. It was Manuela herself.

The actions of a man are not always to be judged by outward appearances, or even by his own reading of his own soul. I loved Carmencita; I loved her madly; I knew at that moment that I loved her; yet my pity for this beautiful creature, who trusted in me, surpassed my love for her.

"I am yours," I said, turning to Manuela. I had meant to add something by way of explanation to Carmencita, but words failed me.

I hope it will never again be my lot to behold a human face with the expression that passed over Carmencita's as she heard my words. For a moment she stared at me, motionless, as if she could not believe the testimony of her own ears. There was not a tear in her eye, and her face was expressionless as carved stone. The quiver of her lip alone, though, expressed more and deeper emotion than a torrent of tears.

Then a smile, such as I never saw before and never want to see again, passed over her face, a smile so full of pain, and without even a semblance of mirth. I was unable to speak. She broke into a harsh, half-maniacal laugh, and then, without a word of anger or reproach, without a word to indicate what she was suffering, she passed out of the room, a queen to the last.

I watched the door through which she passed with sightless eyes. I was unable to withdraw my gaze from it. I knew that my words had wounded her, but they were past recalling now. I was heedless of the caresses that Manuela showered upon me. I only knew that Carmencita Paramonte was the one woman I loved, and that I had alienated myself from her, perhaps forever.

Heedless of my indifference, Manuela was showering caresses upon me. I knew that it had been through her that I had alienated the woman I loved. I tried to be harsh with her, but I could not. Instead I took her in my arms and kissed her.

She was happy as a lark. She was blinded by her great love for me. Now that she was in my arms she did not even ask an explanation of the scene she had just witnessed. For her, tender, confiding little woman that she was, it sufficed that I had declared that I loved her.

"I am so happy with you," she murmured, nestling her head upon my shoulder and turning her sweet face up to mine.

"It can't last much longer, though," I returned gently. "I must leave Peru."

"I thought you had already gone," she said. "I could not live here any longer without you. When I saw you coming here, and followed you, I was going to end it forever."

"I wish we could end it once and forever."

She grasped my arm.

"Why not?" she exclaimed with parted lips. "Why not die together? But, oh, no, I am not ready to die! I cannot."

"Then we must part."

"Must we, though? It is so hard. You say you are going away. Can't I go with you? We could go somewhere—anywhere—just as far away from

Peru as we can get. Oh, let us go away together. We could live so happily. We would have love, and that is everything. Please don't leave me here without you."

"But, Manuela——"

"Please don't leave me. I love you so. If you leave me here I shall die. I can't live here without you. You will not refuse, will you, dearest?"

A very demon took possession of me. Why not? I said. Why not leave Carmencita and fly with this woman who loves you? Why not let her follow you to the ends of the earth? Why not do this, leave all the guilty past behind and live only for the future?

Just then there was a heavy tramp outside, and the knob of the door was turned. The door swung open. The newcomer pushed angrily in. Manuela gave a frightened scream as she caught sight of him. She clung to me in terror.

"Oh, don't let him touch me!" she cried.

I put my arm about her waist to support her. The other hand gripped the butt of my revolver. I recognized the man the instant I saw him. It was Colonel Aguilar. His uniform was dusty and dirty from travel. I supposed that he had just arrived in Arequipa. He wore his sword and revolver.

He glanced quickly around the room. I had thought him a man of iron without any human passion or motive, but here was perhaps the one weak point in his armor. He stepped back and his stern, hard face was fairly livid.

"So here is my wife!" he exclaimed. "So this is where you were going! You didn't know that I was following you, but I was all the same. What

Satander told me was true. I didn't believe it then, but now—you dog!" to me. "I'll give you what you deserve."

Manuela was still clinging to me in her terror, calling on me to protect her. Suddenly she uttered a little shriek of fear as Colonel Aguilar drew his great army revolver. She clung still more tenaciously to me.

I saw Colonel Aguilar's move and tried to get my own revolver out, but with maddening perversity the hammer of the weapon caught upon my pocket. Colonel Aguilar pointed his revolver at me, and his finger crooked around the trigger.

"You shall die!" he cried hoarsely.

He pulled the trigger. However, he must have been too much disturbed to take aim, for instead of me, the bullet struck Manuela. She fell back perfectly limp in my arms.

"Coward! Murderer!" I cried, unable to control myself. "You have murdered as pure a woman as God ever made in human form. You devil!"

But Colonel Aguilar was also beside himself with rage and fury. He did not care that he had just shot his wife. Crack! he fired at me again. He was beside himself with fury and did not take time to aim.

My revolver came out now, and I fired at him. My first shot was without effect, but at the second Colonel Aguilar sank into a shapeless heap. The blood was streaming from a bullet hole between his eyes.

Manuela was a dead weight in my arms. A great lump rose in my throat as I carried her to a little wooden bench at one side, and stretched her at full length upon it. A great red stain on the bosom of her dress showed where her husband's bullet had struck her. A great wave of pity came over me.

Tenderly I smoothed out the folds of her dress, heedless of the fact that I might be discovered and arrested at any moment. She opened her eyes wearily, and a sad smile came over her pallid face.

"It is for the best," she whispered, huskily. "I could not love you in life, but I can love you in death. Kiss me, dearest." She put her arms around my neck as I bent over and imprinted a last kiss upon her lips.

The effort was too much for her. With a spasm of pain she sank back and closed her eyes.

"Thank God! she never knew!" I murmured as I rose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I MEET RIABLO.

I realized now that my position was very perilous indeed. At any moment some one who had heard the shots might appear, and then it would be all over with me. I tiptoed across the room to the door and peeped out. I could see nobody. It surprised me to find that there was nobody about, but I took advantage of the fact and hurried out.

I glanced quickly about as I came out of the room, but no one took any notice of me. A little distance away I saw some men running in the opposite direction. Later in the day I learned that there had been a shooting scrape in a low dive a short distance away, and those who heard the shots in the station had supposed that they proceeded from this point. Happily no one was near enough to positively know from what point the shots proceeded. It was a narrow escape, and I thanked my lucky stars that I had escaped.

Thanking heaven that I was still free, I hurried away from the station. For hours I continued walking hither and thither, all over the city, without very well knowing what I was doing. I must have attracted considerable attention, and it is a wonder to me now that I was not arrested.

I was not sorry that I had killed Colonel Aguilar. I had acted in self-defense, and even had not that been so, it was but a just revenge for Manuela's death. What I wanted to find principally was a way to reinstate myself in Carmencita's affections.

"There's only one thing that I can do," I decided at last, "and that is to go around and see her. Maybe I can make her change her mind."

I presumed that when she left the station she had returned straight home. At any rate, I determined to go there. Immediately I put my resolve in execution.

A servant opened the door for me. I thought he looked at me rather harshly.

"Is Señorita Paramonte in?" I asked.

"No, she is not," he returned, with a trace of hesitation.

"I am sorry."

I was about to turn away, when I thought I caught sight of Carmencita through the half-open door.

"Tell Señorita Paramonte that I must see her," I said.

"She is not in," persisted the servant.

"And I know that she is in. I have just seen her."

The servant tried to slam the door in my face, but I threw out my foot and held it open.

"I will see her," I said angrily.

Then by sheer force I pushed the door open and entered the house. The servant was retreating before me, as if he expected me to give him a good thrashing.

As I shut the door behind me I caught sight of Carmencita again. She did not shrink from me, as I had expected, but instead came out where I was. Her face was still as expressionless as marble, but I could see that she had suffered. I detested myself for having been the cause of that suffering.

"I thought I had done with you," she said, speaking in slow, measured tones, without a trace of feeling. "I have discovered your real character at last, and I thank God for it. You are nothing to me."

"I have come to you to explain," I began, speaking with difficulty.

"To explain!" she exclaimed with a bitter laugh. "Such deception as yours cannot be explained."

"But, Carmencita, I beg you to listen to me. It was for your own safety and mine that I told that woman that I loved her, when really my heart belonged to you alone."

This was a lie, and I knew it, but it was the most plausible explanation that I could make Carmencita.

"For my safety, bah!"

"But listen to me. That woman knew who I am. She knew that I was a rebel, and that I had escaped from Santa Rossa. It was in her power to disclose my real identity, and hand me over to the government. I had had to pretend that I was in love with her before. I had to keep up that pretense there. If I hadn't we would both have been arrested. Don't you see how it is, Carmencita, dearest?" I continued eagerly. "If I had told her the truth—that I loved you alone—a word from her and it would have all been up for us both. Believe me, won't you, Carmencita?"

"Señor Garnack," she said, sternly, "you deceived me cruelly, shamefully. You are deceiving me now. Believe you? Take your word? I would sooner take the word of the vilest criminal in all Peru."

"I haven't deceived you, Carmencita. I do love you. I——"

"Then you have deceived this other woman. There is no difference. Necessity? Do you suppose that I am going to believe there was any necessity about it? How could I be happy as your wife, knowing that this woman loves you."

"But think of your own position. What if you were arrested?"

"I would sooner languish in the vilest dungeon in Peru than trust myself in your hands."

"But, Carmencita, I love you."

"How can you talk about love?"

"You would make a fortune upon the stage," I said, changing my tactics. "You are a queen of tragedy."

"And you are a king of villainy."

"But, Carmencita, won't you believe me? Won't you trust me? I love you, and you alone."

"Two hours ago you declared that you loved another."

"That was necessity."

"Necessity. You—oh, please go away. I don't want to ever see you again. Let me forget you."

"Don't you love me, Carmencita?" I asked, tenderly, stepping toward her.

She shrank from me.

"Don't touch me," she cried. "Please go away."

"Don't you love me?" I continued, pleadingly.

"Once I loved you. God only knows how I loved you. I was willing to trust my life, my honor, everything to you. But now, I hate you. I never want to see your face again. Please leave me."

"Very well," I said quietly, choking down my emotion. "I will leave you."

I hurried out of the house. Carmencita was forever lost to me. I had loved her madly, passionately, but I had lost her. I must leave Arequipa immediately, and it must be without Carmencita. A great lump rose in my throat.

My head was throbbing madly. Every nerve in my body was on end. I must blunt my sensibilities somehow, or I felt that I would go mad. The consuming fires of passion were coursing through my veins. I went into the first wine shop I came to, and got a glass of whiskey. I swallowed it at one gulp and called for another. The bar-keeper seemed to have some doubts concerning my sanity, but he poured out another glass. This, too, I swallowed at a single gulp.

The whiskey did have the effect of at least partially deadening my feelings. I kept on drinking at every wine shop I came to, and pretty soon I must have been getting a little tipsy.

In one of the low dives I ran across Riablo. He recognized me immediately.

"Why, how does it come that you are here?" he asked. "I thought you were captured as a burglar that night we robbed old Aribla's house?"

"I wasn't, though," I returned. Then I told him how I managed to escape.

"I got away with all the stuff before the soldiers came. I thought they had got you, though."

"But they didn't, thank the Lord!"

"You're looking devilish bad, I must say, Garnack," he continued. "What's troubling you?"

I was just drunk enough to be ready to confide anything to anybody, regardless of the consequences. If a soldier had asked me, I suppose I would have told him everything. At any rate, I at once blurted out to Riablo the tale of my infatuation with Carmencita Paramonte, and the complications which Manuela's infatuation with me had brought about.

The clever villain listened quietly to the whole story. He seemed interested.

"You certainly are in a devil of a hole," he said.

"Yes, and I've got to get out of Peru as soon as I can. I am liable to be arrested at any time."

"Yes, you certainly are in a complicated fix."

"What would you do about it?" I asked, turning to Riablo's resourceful mind for advice.

He smiled slowly. There was a wicked gleam in that smile.

"Do you want to marry the girl?" he asked, glancing up.

"Of course."

"Well, then, I believe I have a plan that will suit you," he said, smiling again.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's a little bit shady, but I don't think you'll object to it on account of its evil."

"But I want to hear your plan."

"Well, it's just this. I know of a priest about a mile out of the city. He'll undertake the job for you. He hasn't any more scruples about such things than I have. He's had work like this before."

"But your plan."

"Now, just after dark to-night we can go up to where your lady is staying with a carriage. We 3 can lure the girl out somehow and take her away to the priest in the carriage. The priest will marry you to her all right. I'll hide you till you can get out of the country with her. What do you think of it?"

I was just drunk enough to be ready to take part in any such foolhardy plan.

"It's the very thing," I cried.

During the afternoon Riablo and I looked after the details of the plan. For a small consideration the villainous old priest was found to be quite ready to perform the forced ceremony. We got a carriage, but we were afraid to employ a regular driver, and Riablo was to hold the reins. I was to devote myself to our beautiful prisoner.

Riablo had arranged, after the ceremony was performed, to keep us in hiding for a week or two, until I could get across the frontier with my unwilling bride.

By evening the whiskey had died out to some extent. Then I realized fully the enormity of our devilish undertaking, but I determined to carry it through now. I justified the course we were taking by the thought that Carmencita was really in love with me, and was only angry on account of Manuela. Had I been alone I might have given over the undertaking altogether, but I did not care to bring Riablo's ridicule down upon me.

At the eleventh hour, however, I decided that I would at least test Carmencita's love. If the test convinced me that she really loved me, I would carry the thing out, but if it was the other way I would give the thing over, and leave the country alone.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN INTERRUPTED CEREMONY.

In accordance with the plan that we had worked out, Riablo and I drove up to Carmencita's just after nightfall. I sprang from the carriage and started up to the house. Just at that moment the door opened, and a tall figure was silhouetted against the light of the house. I concealed myself behind a bush which happened to be convenient. He rushed past me almost at a run, and did not see me.

"If I can only find that infernal scoundrel Garnack," I heard him mutter as he rushed past, "I'll shoot him the minute I see him. The infernal villain!"

So Carmencita had told her old lover of my perfidy. This only made my stay in Arequipa more perilous. Raymond was so engrossed in his own thoughts that he hardly noticed the carriage standing at the curb. I had no doubt that he meant to hunt me up and kill me.

As soon as he was gone, I hurried up to the door and knocked upon it roughly. I pulled down the brim of my hat and turned up the collar of my coat, so as to conceal my features as much as possible. I did not want Carmencita to know who I was at the time.

The same servant that had opened the door for me that morning opened it now, but he did not recognize me.

"I want to see Señorita Paramonte on important matters," I said, disguising my voice as much as possible.

In a moment Carmencita appeared.

"What is it?" she asked.

I meant now to test her love.

"Señor Garnack was wounded in a duel," I said, in disguised tones. "He is at the house of a friend outside the city. He wishes to see you."

I saw her tremble, and a look of troubled eagerness that was pleasing to me came over her face.

"Señor Garnack, did you say?"

"Yes, he desires to see you."

I disguised my voice so well that she never guessed my real identity. She hesitated for an instant.

"How am I to go?" she asked, brokenly.

"We have a carriage for you."

"I will go," she said.

She disappeared for a moment, and then returned ready for her journey. She took my arm and I trembled at her touch. In a moment we were at the carriage.

She got in first and sank back among the cushions. As I sprang in after her, my hat was caught and jerked back from my face. We were in the light, and my face was disclosed to her. A look of terror came over her face and she gave a little scream.

Cursing my clumsiness, I put my hand over her pretty mouth and jerked her roughly back to her seat, from which she had risen. She offered no resistance, but she was trembling, and she shuddered at my touch.

"For God's sake drive up!" I called out to Riablo.

Riablo's whip cracked, the horses started forward, the carriage lurched a bit and we were off. Riablo drove as fast as he could without attracting special attention. In a very few minutes we were out of the city.

I took my hand from Carmencita's mouth. She made no outcry whatever.

"So it's you, is it?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, it's me," I returned with some irony.

"I thought better of you," she returned, with a little quiver in her voice.

"I mean you no harm."

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked, with a little gasp.

"I am going to have you marry me," I returned grimly.

"I suspected as much."

"I love you, Carmencita."

"Is this the way you prove your love?"

I bit my lip and said nothing.

In a few minutes we arrived at the little church where the ceremony was to be performed. A violent fit of trembling seized Carmencita as the carriage drew up. She recovered her composure, though, as I assisted her from the carriage. We entered the church together.

"In five minutes, Carmencita," I whispered, "you will be my wife."

"Oh, Señor Garnack," she suddenly cried, imploringly, "don't force this upon me. If you have one spark of manhood left——"

"I haven't, though," I interrupted, biting my lip. "The only thing I know is that I love you with all my heart."

"Yet you force this upon me."

"Carmencita, I love you, and I know that you love me. I have determined that you shall be my wife. Then we will leave this country forever. I mean what I say."

She looked at me wistfully, yet bravely. There were tears in her eyes. However, she rose to the full height of her queenly dignity, and she grasped my arm.

"Very well, if you are determined, I am ready," she said simply.

I led her up to the altar. Her face was white and set, and she was staring straight in front of her. In the pale light there was something terribly ghastly and deathlike about her.

Hand in hand we stood before the altar. Her hand was cold and clammy in mine. Riablo was the only witness. The priest was there in his long robes. He was a crafty little scoundrel, with a flabby, sensual face, ungainly body and repulsive appearance. He smiled at us patronizingly.

I glanced at Carmencita. She was staring at the floor in front of her, but her bosom was heaving with emotion. A wave of pity surged through my heart. Suddenly her eyes were raised to mine with a look of mute appeal, although no sound came from her lips.

"My God!" I exclaimed, "I can't stand this! Carmencita, unless you wish it, this thing goes no further. God knows I love you and want you for my wife, but I can't do this thing!"

A happy light came into her eyes, and a soft flush overspread her face.

Before Carmencita could reply there was a great clatter of hoofs on the outside. A sickly, yellow hue crept over the old priest's flabby face. Riablo was alarmed. My knees were shaking beneath me.

Riablo sprang to his feet and made a dash for a window at the rear. He was a wary scoundrel, and meant to take no chances. There was a crash of glass and Riablo was gone. I would have followed his example, but I was unable to move.

A moment later the door of the church was flung open. I half expected a dozen armed men to swarm in, but there was only one. The priest was on his knees supplicating him to treat him as a man of God. With alarm I recognized the man as Raymond. Doubtless he had heard Carmencita's scream and had followed us.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he cried out as he recognized me. "You devil!"

I was too much surprised to move. I made no attempt to get at my revolver. Raymond's hand quickly went round to his hip; he drew his revolver, and pointed it at my head. It was cocked, and his finger curled nervously around the trigger. I remembered what I had heard him say. I was sure that he meant to kill me, and I tried to say my prayers.

"Garnack," he said, sternly, "you infernal scoundrel, you'll get your just deserts now! You deceived this woman! I give you ten seconds to live."

I was ready to drop from fear. His hand was twitching nervously. Any moment might be my last. Carmencita was clutching my arm nervously.

"Oh, don't shoot him!" she called to Raymond imploringly. "Please don't!"

He glanced at her in a startled way. Evidently he had not expected interference from this quarter.

"Why not?" he demanded fiercely. "Why not shoot the black-hearted devil?"

She flushed and her grasp upon my arm tightened, as she framed her reply.

"Because," she said, hesitatingly, "because I—I love him!"

I acknowledge that I was surprised. I least expected an avowal of her love at this time. Raymond was dumfounded.

"You love him?" he repeated, incredulously. "After what he's done?"

"Yes, I love him! Oh, please don't shoot him!"

Raymond hesitated a moment. Then he gave a harsh laugh and put up his revolver.

"Very well," he said, calmly, and with resignation. "I swore I would kill him, but I'll spare him for your sake. God knows he doesn't deserve it, though."

I glanced in bewilderment, first at Raymond and then at Carmencita. Her cheeks were ruddy and the light of love was dancing in her eyes. Raymond was at a loss what to do.

"Do you mean that you really want to marry this scoundrel?" he demanded.

Carmencita flushed still more and lowered her eyes.

"Yes, I do," she said hesitatingly. "I do want to marry him."

"Then it shall be so."

The priest was still praying, half frightened to death. At Raymond's order he proceeded with the ceremony. I don't think he realized what he was doing. For my part, it was all like a dream to me—the words that made Carmencita Paramonte my wife. Raymond watched the ceremony with a grim, ironical sneer, entirely foreign to his nature.

"Congratulations, Garnack!" he said with a harsh laugh, grasping my hand.

Then he strode out of the little church. He paused for an instant in the doorway, and glanced back. Then his tall form was lost in the gloom. I never saw him again.

. . . . .

My story is done. Three days later, Carmencita and myself were on a steamer bearing northward, with Peru forever behind us.

THE END.

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